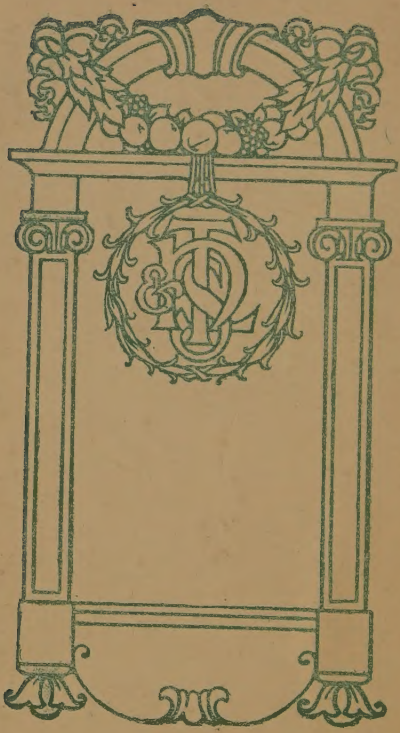

E. P. Senior

June - 1950.

IN AN ENCHANTED ISLAND

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

THE GREAT BOER WAR. *Arthur Conan Doyle.*
COLLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS. *G. W. E. Russell.*
FROM THE CAPE TO CAIRO. *E. S. Grogan.*
SPURGEON'S SERMONS. *Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, LL.D.*
SIR FRANK LOCKWOOD. *Augustine Birrell, K.C., M.P.*
THE MAKING OF A FRONTIER. *Colonel Durand.*
LIFE OF RICHARD COBDEN. *Lord Morley.*
MEMORIES GRAVE AND GAY. *Dr. John Kerr.*
PARIS TO NEW YORK BY LAND. *Harry de Windt.*
BY DESERT WAYS TO BAGHDAD. *Louisa Jebb.*
SOME OLD LOVE STORIES. *T. P. O'Connor.*
FIELDS, FACTORIES, & WORKSHOPS. *Prince Kropotkin.*
PROBLEMS OF POVERTY. *Dr. Chalmers.*
THE BURDEN OF THE BALKANS. *M. E. Durham.*
LIFE AND LETTERS OF LORD MACAULAY.—I. & II. *Sir George O. Trevelyan, Bart.*
WHAT I SAW IN RUSSIA. *Hon. Maurice Baring.*
WILD ENGLAND OF TO-DAY. *C. J. Cornish.*
THROUGH FINLAND IN CARTS. *Mrs. Alec Tweedie.*
VOYAGE OF THE "DISCOVERY."—I. & II. *Captain Scott.*
FELICITY IN FRANCE. *Constance E. Maud.*
MY CLIMBS IN THE ALPS AND CAUCASUS. *A. F. Mummery.*
POVERTY. *B. Seebohm Rowntree.*
SEA WOLVES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. *Commander E. Hamilton Currey, R.N.*
FAMOUS MODERN BATTLES. *A. Hilliard Atteridge.*
THE CRUISE OF THE "FALCON." *E. F. Knight.*
THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS. *Jack London.*
GRAIN OR CHAFF? *A. Chichele Plowden.*
LIFE AT THE ZOO. *C. J. Cornish.*
THE FOUR MEN. *Hilaire Belloc.*
CRUISE OF THE "ALERTE." *E. F. Knight.*
FOUR FRENCH ADVENTURERS. *Stoddard Dewey.*
FIFTEEN CHAPTERS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY. *Russell.*
15,000 MILES IN A KETCH. *Captain R. du Baty.*
KNOWN TO THE POLICE. *Thomas Holmes.*
THE STORY OF MY STRUGGLES. *Arminius Vambéry.*
THE CITY OF THE WORLD. *Edwin Pugh.*
THE PANAMA CANAL. *J. Saxon Mills.*
THE ISLAND. *Richard Whiteing.*
THE PLEASANT LAND OF FRANCE. *R. E. Prothero.*
THE RIVER WAR. *Winston Churchill.*
TRUE TALES OF MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE. *Mrs. Le Blond.*
THE JOURNAL OF THE DE GONCOURTS. *Edited by Julius West.*
A TRAMP'S SKETCHES. *Stephen Graham.*
THE CABIN. *Stewart E. White.*
RED FOX. *Charles G. D. Roberts.*
THE GREAT ARMADA. *Richard Hale.*
ADVENTURES ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD. *Mrs. Aubrey Le Blond.*
THE STORY OF THE MALAKAND FIELD FORCE. *Winston S. Churchill.*

Etc., etc.

Others to follow.

Castles reared their clustering towers on the mountain tops.

IN AN ENCHANTED ISLAND

OR

A WINTER'S RETREAT IN CYPRUS

BY

W. H. MALLOCK

"For always me the fervid languid glories
Allured, of heavier suns in mightier skies"

THOMAS NELSON & SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK

NOTE

On the day of publication of this book the Publishers and the Author received an intimation of a fact before unknown to them, that Mr. Wyke Bayliss had previously published a book with a title which, though not identical, was unfortunately similar. It is hardly necessary to say that, had this been known earlier, the title of the present volume would have been altered, and that both the Publishers and the Author regret the accidental coincidence.

It is hoped, however, that, as the subject of the two books is wholly different, and as that of Mr. Mallock's is unmistakably indicated by the second portion of its title, no confusion in the public mind is likely to arise from the circumstance.

November 1889.

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IN AN ENCHANTED ISLAND.

CHAPTER I

THE TRUE TRAVELLER

I SUPPOSE that this book, if classified in the usual way, would be called a book—a very slight book—of travels; but I would rather call it myself a record of a fragment of life which was, by the magic of its unfamiliar surroundings, detached like a dream from the things of the modern world—from steam, from progress, from the glorious march of democracy—and suddenly came between them with the lulling and luxurious charm of an interlude from an opera heard between the acts of a farce.

I tell the reader this by way of a timely warning, so that he may know at starting how much or how little to expect of me. The scenes I shall have to dwell upon lie in a classical country which is full of

interest for students, for politicians, and for speculators—indeed for earnest or practical people generally—but whether the reader will be interested in what I may say of them, will depend very much on what are the tastes or temper with which, if occasion offered, he would visit these scenes himself. Would he visit them eager to unearth prehistoric pots for museums? to throw a new light on the relations of Phœnician art to Hellenic? or else to collect facts with which to discredit the Colonial Office? or to see what money might be made out of the place or people? Would he be a man with a special object, or still worse, a man with a special subject? If he would, let him throw this book in the fire. It is not written for him—it would certainly not appeal to him.

If it appeals to any one, it will appeal to a class of men who take to travel in a different spirit altogether, and who frankly admit that what they seek under other skies is neither profitable, nor useful, nor edifying information of any kind, but merely this—the stimulant of a new mental experience. No doubt their taste in this respect is for nothing but a more refined form of dram-drinking; and that

perhaps may be thought sufficiently immoral and frivolous. And yet such men after all are the only true travellers, for it is they alone who really love change for the sake of change, taking it into their system as a smoker inhales smoke, and finding it exhilarate them like a kind of spiritual haschish. All other travellers are travellers merely by accident. They go to distant places for some definite object, which it so happens is to be had at a distance only—a picture gallery, a gaming-table, or a good climate in January—but they would like it as well or better if they could find it nearer home; whilst as for the excursionist, who in the course of a single holiday is "personally conducted" through India, Japan, and America, it can hardly be said that he has ever left home at all. He has virtually sat still and looked at a moving peep-show. The globe has gone round before him, he has not gone round the globe.

But the true traveller seeks precisely what the excursionist dreads, and what those who travel with a definite object are indifferent to. It is a sense of escape from all that is homely and habitual —from an earth and a heaven grown sordid with the

dust of vain associations. It is the refreshment like that felt by a fevered cheek when a pillow is turned and the touch of the linen is cool again, produced in the mind by new colours on the mountains, new scents in the atmosphere, forests with unknown borders, roads that lead into mystery, castles that rise from the mists of an enchanted past, and men whose aims and characters one cannot despise, not knowing them. Amongst influences such as these there steals upon the true traveller a delightful sense of being born again to youth. Once more, for the time, he is buoyant with bright illusions; the world is once more fresh to him as it was to the eyes of twenty; life is once more a bubble iridescent with all the colours of hope.

Is the reader a person who can understand this? Do his own sympathies in any way make it intelligible to him? If so, it may prove that he is the very reader I wish for; but, before he decides as to how far he really agrees with me, there is an important part of my meaning which it still remains for me to explain to him. It perhaps may have struck him that what I have said about the charm of newness is capable of being applied to the newness

of a new country—to a clearing with its log houses in some colonial forest, or to the white stores and the printing office of an infant Higgsville or Briggsville, appearing like pustules on the face of an expressionless prairie. I must therefore tell him that in my mind it has no such application whatever; that the newness which I speak of is a very limited thing; that it is essentially connected with the past, and essentially opposed to the present; in fact, that for me the only new world is the old. Nor is this limitation arbitrary. There is a very excellent reason for it. The present, with all its mortal coil of weariness—that is to say, our natural and habitual surroundings—is the very thing which a traveller, as I have tried to describe him, travels on purpose to shuffle off. Now the present, for us in England, what is it? It is a modern order of things, gradually effacing and defacing a traditional: still the traditional order is not yet quite obliterated. But in a new country there is no traditional order at all; and life there for the traveller, instead of being any escape from the present, would be simply the present itself in a balder and more unmitigated form. The only real change for him, the only

And with distance in time it is the same as it is with distance in place. The imagination has its atmosphere and its sunlight as well as the earth has; only its mists are even more gorgeous and delicate, its aërial perspectives are even more wide and profound. It also transfigures and beautifies things in far more various ways. For the imagination is all senses in one; it is sight, it is smell, it is hearing; it is memory, regret, and passion. Everything goes to nourish it, from first love to literature—literature, which, for cultivated people, is the imagination's gastric juice.

And this reminds me that I may as well explain the allusion, which I made at starting, and which may perhaps have sounded contemptuous, to ancient art, and the temper of the professional student. I meant by it nothing disrespectful to literature generally; indeed, how could the traveller whose pleasure is in contemplating the past be indifferent to that through which the past is mainly apprehended? Such a traveller values literature quite as much as the student does. I only mean that he values it in a different way. The professional student, no matter how distinguished, is, after all,

merely a maker of roads for the minds of others to travel on as far and as luxuriously as possible: but the student himself, with his spectacles, cannot realise this or see that his work means nothing but the convenience of post-chaises; and the difference between him and the traveller may be bluntly expressed as follows: that he cares only for making the roads, and the traveller cares only for using them. The traveller is sensible of the importance of exact history; the traveller is sensitive to all the magic of poetry: but facts and dates, as he moves from one historical place to another, are for him merely so many sticks on which to train the tendrils of his imagination; and poetry appeals to him only in so far as it melts into the moonlight, as it peoples again old cities and gardens, and fills the air with echoes of lutes that have long been silent.

He values literature for these reasons only; but could any reasons be stronger? Where, without it, would be the charm that lurks in the iron *grilles* of mediæval Italian palaces, in the twisted ciphers and coronets forlornly rusting on their gates, in the shadows of the grimy archway, or the discoloured marble fountain? Except for literature it prob-

ably would be almost imperceptible; and the more literature the traveller has been able to apply to quickening and expanding his own emotions and prejudices, the more potent and enthralling does this charm become for him. It is thus that, as he wanders amongst scenes of the kind I have alluded to, he moves in a world of sights and sounds and associations undreamed of by the tourists who flourish at *tables d'hôte*, and eye with interest each other's luggage and labels, and unvalued by the student—that odd intellectual Methodist—who has his life in his books, instead of having books in his life.

Such is the sort of person whom I call the true traveller. Such is the sort of person I should now desire for a reader. What the *frou-frou* of petticoats and the odour of *poudre de riz* is for the devotee of the modern *Vie Parisienne*, that for him is the odour of antique life which still clings to so many existing walls, and the murmur of which in certain places is still alive in the air. For him the present is masculine, and he deals with it as he would deal with a man; but the past is feminine, and he loves it as he would love a woman, of whom he never could

weary, because he could never entirely win her. Or to treat the matter to a simile which is perhaps more respectable, and certainly equally true, we may say that the past is to him what an opera or an oratorio is to others. The present may strike his ears as a medley of objectionable discords; but as it drifts away from him, and becomes part of the past, its sound changes to the sound of a distant orchestra or of the sea, by turns august and plaintive with the burden of human destiny; and each ruined marble temple, each desolate baronial banquet-hall, is a shell which murmurs, with a fragment of the illimitable music.

And now I think I must bring myself to make a certain confession. I have said that the pleasure in the past is not logically defensible. I doubt, however, if such is wholly the case. I suspect that most of those who feel it have one logical reason for it; only it is a reason which the modern thinker would consider far worse than none. I arrive at this conclusion by reflecting that for myself individually the past in England begins before the first Reform Bill, and on the Continent before the French Revolution. I am also certain that if we

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discovered a new Pompeii, of which all the inhabitants had been radicals, no matter how perfect the remains might be—even if they comprised a complete file of a Latin *Pall Mall Gazette*—the principal satisfaction the discovery would afford myself would consist in the feeling that all these people were dead. If then I may imagine myself speaking to those excellent leaders of men, and guides of popular aspiration, who make serious faces about a race which, according to their philosophy, began in a gas and will soon end in a glacier, who spell the People with a capital P, and think that we one day shall have a better religion than the Catholic —I would ask them to run over all the things that they are proudest of in the modern world; and I will venture to say that a part of our pleasure in the past is due to the fact that in the past every one of these things was wanting.

In other words, to make a long matter short, the true traveller is mentally the *émigré* of contemporary Revolution; and he exiles himself from his country in order that he may escape at intervals, if not from himself, at all events from his generation. In one way, however, he differs from those

other *émigrés*, his prototypes. He is a far more practical man; and for all practical purposes no one is better able to recognise and accept the inevitable. His many enemies will of course call him a sentimentalist; but his sentiment is generally kept sweet by the brine of some cynical humour; and though it renders him contemptuous of modern life in general, it leaves him none the less equal to dealing with, and making the best of, it. The optimists will probably ask him, Why, if that best is bad, he does not give his fine sentiment to the future instead of to the past, and so throw himself hopefully into the ranks of progressive Humanity. The pessimists will ask him, Why give any sentiment to either? The past died yesterday; the future will be dead to-morrow. But such remonstrances will have very little effect on him. The hopes of the optimists he will leave to the brutal refutation of events; whilst as for the pessimists, he will content himself with saying this to them: that if the present is really nothing but a path between two cemeteries, he finds more to interest him in the full graves than in the empty ones.

And now, if the reader is a traveller in my

sense of the word, or if he has anything of such a traveller's interests, or sympathies, or temperament, he may perhaps be amused and pleased in acquainting himself with the following experiences of my own: and though the best descriptions of the writer "are but shadows," yet they may perhaps, if the reader's "imagination mend them," bring to him a breath from a land of remote mountains, rarely looked upon, except officially, by European eyes—a breath that has touched the weeds on Phœnician tombs, the marble columns of shattered Grecian temples, and Gothic towers on which once the flags of crusaders fluttered, which has borne on its breast the hoarse notes of the muezzin, and the wings of the crows that wheel round rustling palm-fronds and round minarets, which has whiffs in it of Byzantine incense, the freshness of summer seas, and the soul of the plain and of the mountain-side in a perfume of thyme and wild flowers.

And in case such a reader, with the pudicity of common sense, should, in spite of a lurking sympathy with me, fear that I may lead him too far into the regions of the sentimental, he will

perhaps be reassured when he hears, as he shall hear directly, how eminently unsentimental and sordid were the motives which prompted me to visit a country where I certainly soon forgot them.

CHAPTER II

A HINT OF THE EAST

IN the August of 1887 I happened to be staying in Devonshire, with a friend and neighbour who had returned recently from the East. He was a man of as many wanderings and as many exploits as Ulysses; and his house from top to bottom was a museum of barbaric treasures. Enormous heads with horns, from the most secret places of Africa, peered down on the glass and flowers of the dinner-table; the distended jaws of a crocodile yawned over the grand piano; one went upstairs to bed past rows of poisoned arrows and the blazing ruby discs of enamelled Eastern shields. Indeed, hardly an object caught the eye anywhere which did not literally, to quote a sentence of Macaulay's, carry the mind "over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars."

One morning, as I was sitting with my host in

the smoking-room, he produced from the cupboards of a Japanese cabinet a number of gems, and began telling me their histories. This, I confess, I did not find specially entertaining; and I was not sorry when, pausing, he pulled open a drawer, and proceeded to rummage in it for some new subject of conversation.

"Here," he said at last, "is another curious specimen." And he produced and handed me a small triangular something, heavy, rough in surface, and in colour a dusky green. "That," he went on, "is a fragment of Verd Antique, the famous marble which was so much prized by the ancients, and the quarries of which have for so long been unknown to the modern world."

I asked him where he found it. "I found it," he said, "in Cyprus, in a remote part of the island; and all about the spot the same priceless stone was to right and left of me in enormous detached masses. More than that, too," he added: "close beside them are other masses of a beautiful clouded yellow. There they lie! Nobody knows of them; nobody but a peasant comes near them. I myself found them only by accident."

I asked him if it might not be practicable to work those quarries profitably. He replied, though without much enthusiasm, that it very possibly might be, provided a man with sufficient knowledge and enterprise should be found willing to undertake the experiment. His tone was not encouraging, and the matter accordingly dropped; but there was a mixture of romance and speculation in the train of ideas it had suggested to me, which kept constantly bringing back at odd intervals to my mind the far-off Eastern island, the unvisited silent spot in it, the veined and grained masses of luxurious green and yellow.

Some weeks later I was at a country house in Yorkshire, where portraits, books, everything—even the screens and chintzes and bell-pulls—were redolent of the eighteenth century. It was Sunday; it was the sleepy hour that succeeds a Sunday luncheon; and my hostess, by way of imparting a little life to a guest, asked one of her daughters to show me a certain book—a picture-book, so I gathered, but I was unable to catch its name. Presently a folio, bound in faded russia, was deposited on a table, and its thick leaves were

being turned over for my benefit. I now realised that it was a French book of travels, dealing principally with the eastern shores of the Adriatic, dedicated to the First Consul, and illustrated with fine engravings. Many of these were of unexpected interest—for instance, several of Pola, and of Diocletian's palace at Spalatro; but there was one above all that at once arrested and fascinated me. It represented a castle, lying somewhere south-east of Trieste, of the most singular aspect, and in the most singular situation imaginable. It was perched on the spur of a mountain, with a river and woods below; and close behind it, gashed in a frowning precipice, was a monstrous cavern, out of which the river issued—a cavern whose mouth, full of unfathomable shadow, was large enough to have swallowed the entire castle at a gulp.

This scene took such hold of my imagination that I began seriously to contemplate altering my winter plans so as to visit it; and the more I dwelt on the scheme the more attractive and practicable it appeared to me. Another castle between Trieste and Venice, which I had long thought of as a place of possible pilgrimage, came back to my mind; I

reflected that I might take it on my way: and my original prospect of a winter and a spring on the Riviera began to undergo a change, like a transformation scene at a pantomime. Presently, all of a sudden, another idea struck me, which at once joined itself to the others, giving them an illuminated background. This was the idea of Cyprus, with its quarries of virgin marble. I had a general impression that one could go by steamer from Trieste to it; and at Trieste I should be already half-way on my journey. I resolved, therefore, that I would add Cyprus to my programme; and that its possible treasures, which had for weeks been amusing my fancy, should in sober earnest be examined, and perhaps exploited, by myself.

I immediately wrote two letters—one to a friend who had lived for years at Venice, and could tell me much about the neighbouring regions east of it; the other to the distinguished traveller who had shown me the green specimen, asking him for a description of the exact spot where he had found it, and also for his advice as to the business side of my project. It was from him that I heard first. A fat envelope came from him with

the specimen itself inside; and crumpled round the specimen was a letter to the following purport :—

> Along the northern Coast of Cyprus runs a chain of lofty mountains, one of which rises into a peculiar peak, in shape rudely resembling the distended hand of a man, and called by the Greeks Pentedactylon, or The Five Fingers. Near this peak is a grotto, within which is a fountain. It is well known to the peasants, and should not be hard to find. Close beside it stands an immense solitary cypress tree; facing it, on the far side of a gorge, is a sheer wall of rocks, to be recognised by their colouring of brilliant red and orange; and above it, at a height of some hundred feet, are to be traced the ruins of an old Byzantine church. Here, in front of the grotto, is lying the green marble.

A few words followed of plain practical advice. I was to get the specimen polished, and submit it to a London expert. If in his opinion the stone would be worth working, I should make an application to the Cyprian Government with regard to it; the initial expenses would not be great, and it was quite possible that the venture might be really profitable.

I did as I was told. I sent the specimen to a polisher. I then took it to a marble merchant, and at the same time wrote to the Governor of Cyprus and explained myself. The marble merchant gave me an answer exceedingly like that

which natural science, if it were only honest, would give in connection with the Progressist's schemes for man. The stone, he said, was not Verd Antique, though at first sight, no doubt, it very strongly resembled it. Still, he admitted that it was of considerable beauty, and would, were it procurable in sufficiently large blocks, be also of considerable value. The size and soundness of the blocks were the things on which the value would depend; and his own opinion was, though he did not profess to feel certain of it, that the blocks would be small, or, if not small, ruined by flaws.

Disappointments, as we know, never arrive singly; and on top of this verdict I received a letter from Venice to warn me against my project of visiting the two castles. If I went at all, said my friend, I should go in the latter spring: such an excursion in the winter months would be miserable. Here was a second blow to the fabric of my delightful plans; and I began to fear that possibly, after all, I should have to subside on those I had so lightly thrown over in their favour. But I found that, in spite of discouragement, it was hard to submit to this. The castles might

wait till a more convenient season; but the idea of Cyprus I could not let slip so easily. For six weeks, beyond horizons of Highland heather, and through mists scented with leaves of November woods in England, I had been seeing visions of tall clustering date palms, ruined temples, and faces turning towards Mecca. My hopes had tasted the unusual as a tiger tastes blood; and I felt that I should not be satisfied until I had had a draught of it. Besides, it was still possible that the marble quarries might prove to be valuable; the belief that they were so, having been the parent of my wish to visit them, was now in its broken condition kept alive by its child; and it endowed, in my eyes, an impatience to be off somewhere with a semblance of sense and meaning which might else have been wanting. Add to this that, in the course of a few weeks, I received two letters from the two chief officials in Cyprus, offering me help and welcome with a cordiality so charming, that, though springing as I knew it did from their own natural kindness, I modestly set down some degrees of its warmth to the well-known pleasure of expecting a new face.

Cyprus, therefore, now remained in my mind for a month or so, much as heaven does in the minds of respectable people, as a place I should shortly go to, though I made no preparations for getting there. I went on with my visits, I wrote one or two papers on Socialism, and here and there I spoke at a political meeting. In fact I ate and drank like the people before the Flood, until one day I surprised myself much as Noah surprised his contemporaries; I entered into the Ark—that is to say, the offices of the Peninsular and Oriental Company—and took my ticket by the overland route for Alexandria. I had already made enquiries as to how Cyprus was to be reached, and, unless I wished to waste time on the road, Alexandria—this seemed certain—was the first point to make for. But how from Alexandria, to get across to Cyprus—by what line of steamers, or on what days the steamers sailed—no one in London was able to tell me confidently. I was obliged, therefore, to rest content in the faith that I should learn particulars on board the boat at Brindisi, and in the hope that I should not—as I learnt was perfectly possible—have to wait at Alexandria for the best part of a week.

A HINT OF THE EAST.

I had taken my ticket a fortnight only in advance, just in time to secure the last berth in the sleeping-car which runs to Brindisi every Friday from Calais; and during that fortnight I found it hard to believe in the reality of the future which I had now definitely prepared for myself. In fact, as so often happens when once a decisive step has been taken, I began to regret what I had done and listlessly to avoid thinking of it. The date of my departure was to be the last Friday in December. I spent Christmas and the preceding days in Devonshire; and the season of goodwill was appropriately enlivened in my neighbourhood by the rival meetings of two Parliamentary patriots, both of whom I knew, and one of whom I assisted. On both sides we wielded the usual phrases; we breathed polite and yet profound distrust of each other, and profound trust in all the rest of the nation. We drew cheers by resounding and reverential allusions to the Integrity of the Empire, to Truth, to Consistency, and to Justice—indeed, to almost everything not a vice that could be spelt with a capital letter. The whole proceedings were fertile in that unintended humour which is the

redeeming feature of modern popular government. By Christmas Eve, however, they had perforce come to an end; and I felt that I owed to them one of the keenest pleasures of life—the pleasure they caused me by their cessation. The day after Christmas day I came up to London to collect some necessaries I had already ordered for my journey. If it had not been that I found myself thus occupied, I should hardly even yet have realised that I was on the point of starting. I dined out twice, I went to the theatre once. Everything happened in such a natural and habitual way that it seemed as if it would go on happening so indefinitely; and I felt as if I were dreaming, rather than as if I were awake, when, on the fourth evening, somewhere about eight o'clock, I found myself muffled on the platform at Charing Cross, with the curves of the huge roof glimmering dimly in the gaslight, and a wind, which seemed like a message from foreign seas, sweeping in through the open arch at the end, along the chimneys of the dark Continental train.

Five minutes later I was drifting out into the night, and my thoughts dwelt regretfully on a

room not yet two miles away from me, where a pear half eaten was still perhaps lying on a dessert plate, with a glass half full, as if waiting for me to return to them; and on another room, where a bed which I should not sleep in was still tumbled with the last disorders of packing.

CHAPTER III

A VOYAGE TO DREAMLAND

LONDON that Christmas had had brighter sunshine than usual, and never before had I seen from Hyde Park Corner the evening skies flush redder over the bare westward trees. My surprise, therefore, was great when, some ten minutes after starting, I saw from the window the first suburban fields gleaming in faint moonlight as if dusted with white sugar. I instantly recollected that that day at a club I had caught in the conversation of some one the words " snow at Chislehurst." I had not at the time paid them any attention, but I now appreciated their meaning, and realised that this whiteness was snow. "A local fall," I said to myself as I turned away to my paper ; but half an hour later, when I again looked out, and the suburbs had given place to the stretch of the open country, the whiteness was not only present, but was wider

and more unbroken, and the hedges and trees were lying on it as if they were scrawled in ink. The farther we went the deeper the snow seemed; and when I emerged from the carriage on Dover Pier, the peculiar smell of it at once came to my nostrils.

There was no wind, however; the air, though keen, was pleasant; and the tall funnel hardly swayed or trembled as the packet moved with its lanterns out into the cadaverous waters. Still half dreaming, and seeming to be wandering in my sleep, I stood on the deck and looked at the coasts of England. There they lay, an odd glittering vision, which with fantastic perverseness reminded me of a birthday cake, and also completed the strange feeling in my mind that suddenly out of autumn we were plunged into mid-winter. Perhaps, so I thought, things would be better in Calais. But at Calais I saw, as we slowly steamed into the harbour, snow shining on all sides, in the wheeling rays of the lighthouse; and the moment I landed I felt the ground like iron.

There was, however, no time for shivering. Directly facing me, amongst the customary trucks and carriages, was an object on wheels, dark and

of unusual length. This I found to be the Pullman sleeping-car for Brindisi, and I was at once hurried off to it with my bundle of rugs and dressing-bag. The door was already very much like the mouth of a wasp's nest, beset by a swarm of obscure-looking men in ulsters. They were going in, and then again they were issuing, with all the apparent aimlessness that annoys us in winged insects; they were asking the conductor the same question three times over, and their lamp-lit faces seemed set with a vague anxiety. With some difficulty I at last effected an entrance. The car was a passage with berths upon each side, and my own berth having been shown me, I entrenched myself in it, and watched my fellow-travellers. One by one they were at last settled in their places; there was an opening of bags, with revelations of socks and handkerchiefs; white collars were being unbuttoned from flannel shirts, and long overcoats dangled from every hook. Presently the conductor brought me some coffee, which I had asked for on entering; whilst I was drinking it there was a low rumbling and a tremor. The train was in motion: we were off for the South and Italy.

Waking next morning, I turned round to the window, in hopes that we possibly might have left the snow behind us. The glass was opaque and gray; I brushed it, but made no clearing; and then I saw that it was coated with thick ice. I took a pen-knife and scraped a small aperture. I looked out on a scene that would have done honour to Siberia. That whole long day we drifted through frozen France, the ice on the windows freezing as fast as one flaked it off. All my hopes had now been sent on to Italy; and south of the Alps, at any rate, I dreamed that blue skies would await us. Evening fell; and my spirits began to rise as my pen-knife laid bare for me a pageant of Swiss mountains, a gloomy lake, the glow of a red sunset, and crags and peaks piled high in the air like thunder clouds. Early in the night we passed the Mont Cenis tunnel; and, before going to bed, I wrapped myself up closely and went out at the end of the car on to the balcony, hoping to feel on my cheeks the touch of a suaver air. Never had its bite been sharper, although not a wind was stirring, except that caused by our own motion. But the spectacle before me was almost staggering

in its beauty. The naked moonlight falling on peak and precipice dazzled the eyes with an unearthly illumination. Passes and gorges towered to right and left of me; the snow, like birds' nests, hung in the climbing pine woods; and the stars, clear as diamonds, rested sparkling on the mountain-tops. And through it all, with its swing and its fierce clanking, feeling its way, the black train was sweeping. Below me were frozen rivers, expanses of silent ice, which now and again flashed with a glare like fire; and down the middle, a ribbon of curving darkness, hurrying water flowed with a noise that was heard fitfully. I waited and watched, expecting every moment to see the prospect open, revealing the plains of Italy. But I waited in vain, till my ears stung with cold. We passed out of one gorge only to find ourselves in another; and still in the distance was range after range of whiteness, and walls of dazzling snow that seemed to rise up to heaven. My feet presently began to grow cold also. I made my retreat into the drowsy, lamp-lit car, and was soon falling asleep in a world of curtains and dressing-bags.

By nine next morning we were already far into

Italy, and I soon was conscious of a distinct and surprising change. I call it surprising because it was the very opposite of the change I had expected. The sky last night had been clear. I counted on its being blue this morning. But instead of being blue it was livid with leaden gray; the winter seemed far more savage than that we had left behind us, and we entered Bologna through snow-drifts ten feet high.

We hurried on southward; but no change came, except that the white desolation seemed to grow more desolate. The green shutters of villas built for sunshine, the gaudy paintings on the walls—Madonnas on blue clouds, or vistas of impossible gardens—looked haggard and piteous in this unnatural weather, like rouged cheeks at five o'clock in the morning. We skirted the Adriatic; its colour was a cold menacing purple; and Ancona stood out in it, squalid like unwashed linen. We seemed to be passing through an extinct or forsaken world. That evening we stopped at a wayside station, and dined in a cold restaurant, under a ceiling daubed with flowers, having had previously all our meals in the train. We were to reach

Brindisi by an hour or two past midnight; so we turned to our berths early, and slept without undressing. At length we were roused by the intimation, half welcome, half odious, that we should, as the conductor put it, "be there in half an hour." In a minute or two the car was alive with the folding and the strapping of rugs, a search amongst blankets for novels and pocket-handkerchiefs, and a great cramming and dragging about of bags. My own preparations made, I escaped outside to the balcony. I was presently conscious that our speed began to slacken; some houses gleamed ahead of us; we slid by some walls and watch towers; a moment more and we were out on a frosty platform, surrounded by porters and a babble of quick Italian. After a little confusion, and many illustrations of the belief that English is a universal language if only spoken loudly enough, passengers, porters, all in a straggling crowd, were hurrying over a ringing pavement down to the moon-lit pier. There, lying close to it, was a tall shadowy mass with masts and towering funnels—our steamer for Alexandria. We ascended its side. Its port-holes were eyes of lamp-light, which

showed the monster wakeful, although it appeared asleep.

I was soon pacing the deck, my luggage collected and disposed of, and was thinking over the journey which had just come to an end—a journey which, though taken weekly by some fifteen or twenty Englishmen, has rarely been taken through a Europe so swathed in one bitter winding-sheet, and which still dwelt in my mind as something spectral and bewildering.

On the steamer, however, there was nothing spectral at all; though certain reminiscences, not entirely commonplace, even now mix in my memory with that smell of the night's keen air. After the three days' rumbling of the train, the sounds which I heard now—detached voices, and the dragging and pushing of boxes—touched the nerves like a pause of solemn expectant silence; whilst the gleam of the harbour lights, the sway of the still waters, the huddled, mysterious houses of the unfamiliar town, all brought home to me, with a sudden and pleasant sharpness, the thought that I was now on the verge of the Western world, and was soon to be floating off from it into the hollow dark-

ness beyond. The imagination, with one of its many passing flatteries, was breathing a sense into me of personal loneliness and adventure when, passing a group of men, I heard my own name called out to me; and I presently recognised in the speaker a certain well-known Life-Guardsman, whom I had last seen with a gardenia, at supper in a London ball-room. I then began to put names to his companions—all of them men of much the same stamp, whose talk seemed, when I joined them, to have been of cigars and rifles. This meeting at first I found rather prosaic and disappointing; but when we began to compare notes as to where we each were going, and found that one was bound for the Soudan, one for Australia, one for Burmah, and two for the deserts beyond Damascus, a common thought slowly stole over all of us. Here were four or five lives—four or five out of millions—so often and so closely touching each other in England, united now by chance under the stars in the south of Italy, and soon again to be separated for the remotest ends of the earth. My friends' faces, in spite of gossip and laughter, looked wan in the shadow, and seemed to be touched

with seriousness ; and as I moved away from them a sense of illimitable distances, stars and sea winds, and the riddle of human destiny, wove itself into the consciousness of the moment, and made all life seem larger.

I descended to the saloon in quest of some sort of supper ; and the first sound that greeted me was a female voice from America—that of a young lady sandwiched between two male admirers—declaring in ringing accents that " she couldn't stand Jerusalem." The last thing I heard before I retired to rest—which we all did before we had left the harbour—was the same young lady informing the same gentlemen—she called one " Bill," the other she called " Darling "—that she had learnt in Paris a new song for the banjo, " lovely, but so wicked that Máma forbade her singing it."

The following days were for the most part sufficiently weary and monotonous. The Ionian Islands lifted their snowy summits up to the clouds as if modelled from Turner's pictures ; my eye lingered on the jagged outlines of Crete—that country seen by so many, explored or visited by so few. In front of these classical scenes the admired of Bill

and Darling paced the deck in a sky-blue "Tam-o'-Shanter," with Bill on one side of her, and sedulous Darling on the other, each provoking her wit, and assailing her with devoted glances; but nothing else impressed itself much on my memory, except this: that I could not get from any one any news whatever about any steamers to Cyprus, that the cold still followed us, that the waves of the Mediterranean were slate-coloured, and that finally, late in the gloom of the third evening, we entered the harbour of Alexandria under a deluge of soaking rain.

All the passengers, with the exception of two or three, were going to proceed at once by train either to Suez or Cairo. The few others, amongst whom I was included, were allowed by the captain to remain for the night on board—a kindness on his part to which he added another, that of instant inquiries for me as to my future journey. His success, however, was not equal to his wishes. He first came to me with news that there would be a steamer in three days. Then he came again to tell me he had been misinformed, and that I should have to wait for six days or a week. My

delight, therefore, was great when, in the course of another hour, everything was cleared up by an agent of Messrs. Cook, who announced that a steamer was going to start next morning, and arranged that some one, by the time I had done breakfast, should come to take me off to it without further trouble.

The steamer was an Austrian Lloyd, which would touch at the ports of Syria, and only reach Cyprus after four days of coasting. This was tiresome; but in one way I was repaid for it, for I found that two of the friends whom I had lit on so unexpectedly at Brindisi would be coming with me as far as Beyrout.

At the hour appointed we were all three in readiness; and a brown man like a wizard, in flowing Eastern raiment, with the word "Cook" written large on a linen ephod, was faithfully awaiting us, who convoyed us across the harbour to a vessel of moderate size about half a mile away. We were somewhat apprehensive as to the sort of accommodation that might be in store for us; but our apprehension only heightened our pleasure at what we found. The saloon and cabins were not

merely clean, they were luxurious; a *déjeuner* which we ordered revealed the hand of a *chef* who would, without any exaggeration, have been a prize to a London dinner-giver; and, best of all, we three were the only first-class passengers.

And now, for the first time since I started, I felt that I was really travelling. During the earlier part of my journey I had been in a sort of trance. On the boat from Brindisi I had been perfectly wide awake; only camp stools, novels, canvas boots, and opera glasses had given the deck an aspect of Margate jetty; and men haunted the bar, their moustaches wet with cocktails, who suggested a garrison town and breathed Angostura bitters. But here suddenly all had become different. Instead of majors and doctors and young ladies going out to be married, there were strange steerage passengers in turbans and floating draperies. I was very soon conscious of a new nasty smell, which I have learned since is peculiar to Arab pilgrims, and which made the very air feel foreign; and at last amongst the crowd, that was slowly growing by boat-loads, I detected some outspread prayer carpets, with their owners squatting in devotion on them. The only

thing that disappointed us was the persistence of English weather. It was not raining, but the sky was dim and cloudy, the wide harbour was swept with a long lumbering swell, and a chilly wind seemed to breathe a blight over everything.

So the day wore on, finding us still stationary. Our own part of the ship was not invaded by anybody, except one solitary figure. He was a man in European dress, with wistful eyes and a fine Hellenic face. He spoke English well, and, advancing to us with dignity, he asked us if we would buy what he called "special photographs." "Be off," said one of my friends. "Take the beastly things away with you." "Not beastly," he said gently, "academic." Then opening a leather case which he carried, he produced from its depths some polished cubes of olive-wood, and with no change of manner except an increased gravity, "Perhaps," he went on, "you would like a piece of the true Cross."

In the course of the afternoon the wind began to freshen. We had not started yet. It was evening before we did so. By that time a stiff breeze was blowing; a drop of rain occasionally spluttered in our faces, and we went out over the

bar into the gathering twilight, plunging through crests of foam.

By the following morning we were at Port Said, where we passed a long, wearisome day. There was rain there also, and the sandy roads were in puddles. The sense of the East was by this time distinct in all of us; but it was an East blighted and draggled, a forlorn mockery of its fame. The day after, however, things at last took a different turn. I found, on waking early, my cabin aglow with sunrise. I looked from the window: sparkles were leaping on the waters. I went on deck, and there—how shall I describe the spectacle?—rose-coloured fleeces wandered on wastes of transparent purple: the naked dome of the sky was soaring and arching over me; and the dark waves heaved, waiting to be lightened into azure. It was some moments before I realised something else: then it burst on me—we were hardly two miles from land. Opposite to us Jaffa was gleaming; and stretching to north and south of it were the brown coasts and the tufted palms of Palestine; and inland, the violet outlines of the hills about Jerusalem.

And now began the process of a new birth, for

which all that had gone before had been a preparation—the birth, so long delayed, out of the Western winter, and the homely associations which thus far, like winter birds, had been following us—the birth out of these into a world increasingly different. At Beyrout, where I spent a day on shore, and where in the evening I said good-bye to my companions, the air was already mild and balmy, the mud walls looked as if they were baking in the sunlight, the hotel garden was grateful with green shadow; and as I sat there, confronted by seventeen Persian cats who were smiling and purring on seventeen empty biscuit tins, a babbling fountain and a tree with scarlet flowers seemed to say to me that I was entering unknown seasons.

By and by I returned to the ship alone. The pale twilight fell, and enfolded us with unutterable tenderness, just revealing the glimmering snows of Lebanon, and leaving the glass of the sea just distinguishable from the air. Lights glistened from the town; a sound like a fairy bell—I suppose it came from a boat, though in the dimness I could not see one—made at intervals

a mysterious tinkling on the water. In due time a term was put to the quiet. There was a dragging of ropes and chains, and a splash of the revolving screw. The funnel buzzed, our bows turned round to seaward, we began to move rapidly, and the sea and the night received us.

Some eight hours later, after a windless passage, I woke up in my cabin, and in sight were the coasts of Cyprus.

CHAPTER IV

THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW LIFE

I STOOD on the deck. I found myself solitary in the opening morning. Bars of crimson and purple were brightening over unseen Palestine; our white wake was a road reaching straight away towards them, with the black smoke from our funnel travelling back over it; the waves splashed and tossed in a chorus of fresh whispers. My dress was of the scantiest, a thin overcoat and *pyjamas;* and the air, breathing through all the fluttering folds, seemed to enter the skin, as it enters a bird's pinions, and gave me a feeling as though I were akin to the wind and foam.

And there Cyprus lay, stretching far along the horizon, a bank of hoary blue with curious pallid gleams on it, and dark purple markings that hinted of cliffs and headlands. At this distance, however, it had no definite meaning. I could only wonder

what it would mean to me one day, and allow the sensations and fancies of the moment to play with me.

In some ways they played delightfully, as if full of the spirit of the early, adventurous hour. But along with this elation I was conscious of a rising anxiety as to what was going to happen to me before the day was over. I was, on arriving, to be the guest of the Chief Secretary, who lived in Nicosia, the immemorial seat of government; and so far as kindness went I was sure of a kind welcome: but as I neared the island I began to realise keenly how very little I, after all, knew about it, and to ask myself if in coming to it I had not been a fool for my pains.

As an island of the imagination in the world of fable and history I could have recited a roll of magnificent names connected with it—antique Egypt and Hellas, luxurious Rome, Byzantium, and crusading Europe; or, again, Adonis, who was wooed on its sloping hillsides; Balaam and Ezekiel, who sang of its power and riches; Solomon and Alexander the Great, St. Paul and St. George the dragon-slayer, Catharine Cornaro of Venice, and the conquering

Sultan Selim. The mere catalogue would have come to the ear like a passage out of *Paradise Lost*. But as for the dates and details which underlay all these associations, my knowledge, I now found, was forlornly less than fragmentary. And what sort of present remained after all this past? My knowledge of this was more inappreciable still. Six weeks ago I was not even aware of the existence of the city in which I should sleep that night—this obscure capital, Nicosia, hidden away far inland, and full, as I had learnt already, of strange relics of antiquity. It was still the merest dream to me except as regards one point, that I should have, as soon as I landed, to drive some thirty miles to it.

The situation, as I gradually thought it over, caused me, I confess, a certain sinking of the heart; and presently, feeling chilly, I sought relief in my cabin, where, pulling a rug over me, I dropped off into a doze. When I awoke and emerged again things had quite a different aspect. The air was mild, the sky was a full-blown blue, and the coasts of Cyprus, hardly three miles away from us, met the eye like the canvas of a moving diorama. So far as I could see, they were utterly bare and treeless,

and they glittered from every facet with a pale dazzling brilliance, in some places colourless, in others suffused with pink, so that now and again one might have fancied them half transparent, as if with all their crags they had been formed out of solid amethyst. I looked long in vain for any sign of a human occupation, and was wondering for how many hours the process of coasting would continue, when, taking a turn forwards, I saw that right ahead of us, shining like snow, and apparently standing in the water, was a row of houses, with a cupola, a campanile, and a minaret, and at one side of it a dot of intensest green—the green of a grove of palm trees. This I knew must be Larnaca, the port of landing. We were now nearing it rapidly. Detail after detail began to grow more distinct. Hollow arches and quaint balconies were discernible; the light of the morning began to flash in the windows, and soon we detected boats putting out to meet us.

Larnaca has no harbour; there is only an open roadstead; and we dropped our anchor about half a mile from shore. I was busy in the saloon over some coffee, when voices and shouts outside proclaimed that the islanders were already beginning

to board us; and when I passed presently into my cabin, which was, like the saloon, on deck, there was a red fez cap at the window, and a brown bearded face, courting my attention with a plaintive, enquiring smile. I lowered the glass, and a voice in delightful English (by which I mean that it was just bad enough to be pathetic) asked if I was the gentleman who was going to land at Larnaca. I said that I was. "Right, sir," the voice replied. "You show me your things. I have good boat here; I put you ashore directly—take you to custom-house; if you want it, get you a carriage. Yes, sir, I manage—yes, sir." The man's manner had something very taking in it, and so had his whole appearance when I saw him at full length outside. His dress, except for his Oriental head-gear, might very well have belonged to a British sailor—a loose pea-jacket and trousers of blue serge—but his face, handsome in feature and dark in colour, had the curious expression only to be found in the East, an expression of appeal and devotion like that of a faithful dog. He was as good as his word. He very soon had me in a boat, manned by a negro and two brigand-like Greeks. As I sat by him in the stern he told me he

was an Arab from Syria, but that he knew Cyprus thoroughly from end to end. I told him I wished to go to the house of the Chief Secretary, and was charmed when he answered promptly, " Right, sir ; I know the gentleman."

After heavily mounting and falling for some time on the swell we arrived at last at a short wooden jetty, with a small steam crane pertly peering over its side, and a square building facing it like a new village school in England. The British flag flying over this last told me that it was the custom-house. Experience presently told me the same thing, for all my luggage was instantly carried off to it and deposited in a verandah, before a door which proved to be locked. The officials, it seemed, were all of them away at breakfast, and my Arab protector suggested that I should follow their example. " If you like," he said, " I take you to the hotel. While you eat I go order the carriage—good carriage, sir ; three horses—and I arrange with these fellows for the price of him. Come, sir, come this way."

I assented and went with him. In something like thirty seconds I had passed out of sight of the steam crane and the custom-house into a world

whose suggestions were utterly strange and different. I was moving rapidly along an ill-paved species of esplanade between the sea and a succession of houses, perforated with pointed arches. Some of these seemed to my hasty glance in passing to give access to nothing but caves of darkness; others revealed glimpses of primitive shops, like fragments of mediæval Italy; and above, protruded on quaint supports over the road, were sleepy Oriental windows, blinded with wooden lattice-work.

Presently my guide plunged into one of the arched interiors, which seemed a sort of cross between a grocer's shop and a drinking-bar; and having spoken a word or two to a woman hidden in the background, he led me out into a wide, echoing passage, and up a flight of bare stone stairs at the end of it. These brought us to a stone-paved, capacious landing, in the middle of which stood a table, with a white cloth and some plates on it. Here my guide begged me to sit down and wait, and engaged, as he hurried off, that some breakfast should at once be sent to me. It came duly, brought by a sallow Greek; and whilst I was finishing it my guide again showed himself; and coming up to me with an air of engag-

ing apology, put into my hand a packet of dirty letters. After a moment's puzzled inspection I realised what these were. They were testimonials to his character, from stewards of yachts and from men-of-war's officers, for whom, I gathered, he had often acted as interpreter. He also told me a fact which gave me more interest in him—that he had, at one time of his life, been servant to Colonel Valentine Baker. I asked him his name. He answered in a word of two syllables, which I mentally spelt S, k, ô, t, i, with a circumflex accent written large over the ô. I was, therefore, amused when a moment later he said, "Once, sir, I been at Glasgow. That why they call me Scotty. Abdullah Scotty, that my name, sir. This coat, these trousers, I get them both in Glasgow. I think, sir," he added, "if we go now, they ready by this time at the custom-house."

This proved to be true. A dapper Maltese, in a check shooting-coat, did what was necessary in the way of inspecting my luggage; and whilst waiting for the carriage which Scotty told me he had ordered, I wandered about in an open space close by and tried to realise my first impressions of the

island. I found them delightful to a degree which I could hardly account for, and which must have been mainly due, at this time, to the sunshine and the enchanting air. I, who a week ago had been shivering in the gloom of Europe, was here moving under a sky of the softest turquoise. The sunlight was penetrating soul and body at once; and my nostrils were touched by the smells of aromatic leafage. On three sides of me were low Government buildings, as raw and new as mortar and red tiles could make them; but they were half hidden by a whispering fringe of pepper trees; and on the other side was the town I had just left, with its white flat-roofed houses, the plumes of its feathery date-palms, and, blue above these, the crags of some distant inland mountains.

Presently, turning round at the end of my beat, I could hardly restrain a laugh at an object I saw before me. It was the carriage—"the good carriage"—standing at the custom-house door, with my luggage, under Scotty's direction, already being placed upon it. This singular vehicle was a battered English wagonette, which had once been black, but was now a permanent dust-colour. It had been

adapted to its present climate by the addition of an iron framework, roofed and enclosed by curtains of pink and white diaper, which exactly resembled a patchwork of housemaid's dusters. There was a lean negro on the box, with a pair of ropes for reins, and standing in front of him were three gaunt horses abreast, whose harness, I must say, showed traces of real care, for in every part it was mended—indeed, kept together—by string.

"Perhaps, sir," said Scotty as I approached, "you like me come with you to Nicosia. This fellow, he not know the house." I had been intending to make the same proposal myself to him, and was glad to find him already prepared to act on it. I climbed to my seat in the transparent shade of the dusters; and was beginning to wonder why we did not start, when my ear was caught by some words which, though strangely familiar to me I had never before heard or expected to hear in conversation. "Ὀκτώ," said Scotty's voice to some one I could not see. Then followed a murmuring, and then his voice said, "Δέκα." Then came "Ἕνδεκα," and in a minute more, "Δώδεκα." It was like a page of the Eton grammar suddenly come to life. My ear

for the first time was catching the accents of modern Greek. I at once perceived what it meant. It was Scotty bargaining in shillings for the price of the carriage. The bargain was struck at thirteen—thirteen shillings for something like thirty miles. Certainly, I thought, whatever else it may be, Cyprus at any rate is not an expensive place.

The next moment there was a noise from the negro's mouth, a whip cracked, the vehicle gave a jerk, my dressing-bag opposite me fell forward on my knees, and at a very decent pace we were moving away from Larnaca. We passed some gardens surrounded by tumble-down mud walls, above which appeared the dark leaves of orange trees ; we passed a Catholic convent, whose church had a pale pink dome on it ; and then, when these disappeared behind some sandy acclivities, we entered a country as bare as a Scotch deer forest. Slopes strewn with boulders descended towards the road or away from it ; rocky surfaces glittered as if they were wet with water ; and far and wide was growing some harsh brown vegetation, that seemed, as I passed it, like stunted and withered gorse. The patchwork of dusters was drawn so closely round me, that I had

no view except through the opening above the door. I leaned out occasionally to see if on either side of me any prospect of a different kind was visible; but I looked in vain. Everywhere the horizon was formed by low undulating ridges, whose summits broke occasionally into fortresses of natural crag, and which here and there, where they receded, enclosed morass-like levels. In a northern climate it would all have formed a picture of dreariness; but I found, to my surprise, that it did not do so here. The sunlight and the air lay on it, like a love philter endowing it with fascination. Everything—shrub and boulder, brown soil, and naked rocky ridge—was softly luminous, as if it were seen through water; and every breath which I drew into my lungs excited me as if it had been drugged with some strange stimulant.

The landscape itself, however, I soon felt, was monotonous; so I gave up staring at it, and betaking myself to a map and to a guide-book, I tried to identify the road on which I was travelling, and I re-read a meagre description of Nicosia. The description told me of gardens, palaces, and minarets, Venetian fortifications, and mediæval Christian

churches, of the palaces of crusading kings, and the tombs of Turkish warriors. The whole was comprised in a few mechanical paragraphs, and when I read it before it had conveyed very little to me; but now the words seemed to become alive, and their very inability to satisfy my curiosity made them all the more powerful in exciting it. Occasionally my attention was called again to the road, by our passing some travelling group, or else some solitary figure. So far as I could see, they were shepherds or peasants mostly, with scarlet caps and long shaggy capotes; and once or twice came a rude cart drawn by bullocks. The men, as we went by them, all glanced back at the carriage, showing bronzed wild faces and dark eyes and moustaches, and were presently lost to sight, like images seen in a dream.

After two hours or so of this kind of progress I gathered from the map that we were approaching a place named Dali—the site of the old Idalium, where a hundred altars once were fragrant to Idalian Aphrodite. Presently the carriage stopped, and Scotty's voice through the curtains explained to me that the horses would rest here for twenty minutes. I descended and looked about me. We were on

the summit of a low ridge of hills. Close at hand was a cluster of flat-roofed mud cottages, and on the opposite side of the road some corresponding outhouses. A few cocks and hens were strutting amongst fragments of broken crockery; a mule's head protruded through a dark crack in a wall, and from the door of the principal cottage a man came with cups of coffee. Scotty informed me that we were now half-way to Nicosia. "It over there, sir," he said. "We get there in two hours." I looked, but no town was visible. It was hidden behind intervening ridges.

The country now before us had the character of an open plain, littered with low brown hills and bounded by purple mountains. The outline of these last was singularly bold and fantastic, cutting the sky with summits like spires or isolated citadels; and I presently realised that amongst them was one eminence, curiously splitting itself into five several peaks, which I at once knew must be Pentedactylon —the Mountain of the Five Fingers. The recognition, in its reality, of what was already familiar to me in words—this seeing of the object which I had heard of in homely Devonshire actually towering in

its far-off native air—sent an odd thrill through me ; it was like seeing a dream come true.

In a few minutes more it was time to be off again, and the curtains of the carriage again narrowed my view. I saw, however, that we were getting into a district which was somewhat more fertile. The road soon began to show a border of asphodel, and on wide tracts I had glimpses of goats and sheep wandering. So the time wore on—an hour and then two hours—but, though I looked out anxiously, there was still no Nicosia. The only new feature was a number of isolated hills, perfectly flat at the top and looking like artificial fortifications. At last, against the side of a bare yellowish cliff, I detected a mud village squalidly simmering in the sunshine. "Good heavens!" I thought, "and is this the city of the Crusaders?" But the carriage passed on. My alarm was, happily, groundless. Presently by the roadside were a stream and a grove of palm trees. A mile farther on was a group of men who were road-mending. I cannot say that I thought their expression agreeable ; nor is this to be wondered at, as I learnt afterwards they were convicts. Then after another mile or so was a group

of another character—three young men in tweeds, with the air of Government clerks, who looked after me with a smile of suburban curiosity, and exhibited British freckles and British briar-wood pipes. Then came Scotty's voice saying something or other through the curtains, which I took to mean that we were nearing the end of our journey. I stretched my head out to see if the environs of any town were about us, but I still saw nothing but rocks and open country. I was wondering at this and beginning to be a little impatient, when suddenly a shadow for a moment fell over everything. On each side appeared masses of ancient masonry. We had passed through some thick walls ; we were next in an open space, surrounded by a vision of vague mud-coloured buildings : a moment more, and with a hollow echoing rumble we were rapidly moving along a narrow shadowy street, and at last abruptly the carriage came to a standstill.

On descending I found myself before a large arched doorway, with heavy folding doors in a blind white-washed wall, and above it a mass of overhanging roofs and windows. But I had no time to distinctly realise anything before, in response to

Scotty's efforts and the bell-pull, the doors were opened, and revealed a smart-looking Greek servant in a dark braided jacket and dark voluminous trousers. I was a little apprehensive that we might have come to the wrong house, but the man, who spoke English, instantly reassured me. Crossing the threshold, I found myself in a wide passage, opening into cloisters supported on pointed arches. These last ran round two sides of a garden, green with orange and lemon trees and the tall fronds of bananas. There was a murmur of water somewhere softly splashing into a basin, and the air was full of a faint but delightful smell of violets. I was conducted along the cloisters to a flight of stairs that led from them, and was just preparing to mount when my hostess came down to meet me. By way of a thin disguise I will speak of her as Mrs. Falkland. Her greeting was of the kindest, and, with a thoughtfulness which I fully appreciated, she told me that in the dining-room she had ordered some luncheon to be awaiting me. We went there. It was a room on the ground-floor opening on the cloisters. It was lofty, if somewhat narrow. It was spanned by a pointed arch, which helped to

sustain the bare beams of the ceiling. The walls, covered with a smooth pinkish plaster, gave the scene an aspect of non-European simplicity, whilst a sparkle of plate on the sideboard and on the table at once betrayed the presence of European comfort and luxury. It was a pleasant, piquant mixture, and produced a strange sense in me of conditions untried hitherto and altogether mysterious.

My repast over I was taken to the rooms above. The stairs led to a sort of lofty hall, shaped like the letter L, directly over the cloisters. Its stone floor was strewn with Oriental rugs; its bare plastered walls were hung with Oriental embroideries, and here and there were some small tables and ottomans. Out of this opened the drawing-room and various bedrooms—my own amongst the number. My portmanteaus, I found, were by this time duly in their places; and my hostess left me to arrange myself after my dusty journey. I resolved, whilst annoying myself over the troubles of unpacking, to engage Scotty for my servant during my stay in the island—a contingency which, I believe, he foresaw from the first himself. By the time I had shaved and dressed it was already five o'clock, and the dim

blue twilight without was falling rapidly over everything. As I emerged and approached the drawing-room, I was surprised by a babble of voices, and on entering I found Mrs. Falkland entertaining a large tea-party. The high room, roofed with dark open rafters, was full of shadow, despite some glimmering lamps; and the forms and faces of the company were all mysterious and uncertain. I was never able to identify a single member of it afterwards, but they all must have belonged to the English colony of officials, to whom Mrs. Falkland was at home on periodical occasions.

I listened in silence to the conversation round me, and never had I listened to any with a more singular flavour. The dozen or so of visitors, it seemed, were of all ages—girls, old ladies, and youngish and middle-aged men. Some of them talked of practising hymns for the church, others of hunting, of races, of last year's picnics, and the glories of a possible ball. In many respects, no doubt, it was just what might be heard any day in the outskirts of any provincial town in England; but the names of the places mentioned and certain pieces of slang, as if in a mad dream, were all of them metamor-

phosed into Greek. It was like a dialogue from Homer entangled with a dialogue from Miss Austen's novels. There was something inexpressibly grotesque in the idea of a curate who had lost his copy of "Hymns Ancient and Modern" at Paphos, and in hearing a young lady date some delightful memory as "the time when Mr. Button was so ridiculous on Olympus."

Amused as I was, I confess I was somehow mortified at the thought of Mr. Button profaning these august localities. I felt that his presence would act on the ghosts of the gorgeous past, as a cross-handled sword is supposed to act on the devil. But as soon as his friends were gone he slipped away from my memory; and a sense of surrounding strangeness once more took possession of me. Now that the room was quiet I was introduced to my hostess's daughter, and before long her father, Colonel Falkland, entered. I learned presently that I was not the only guest, but that a young professor from Cambridge, with his wife from Girton, were also staying in the house, being in Cyprus to superintend some excavations. They had just come in, having been out at their work all day, and I did not see

them till dinner time. We assembled at eight o'clock, and our conventional evening coats showed curiously amongst our semi-barbarous surroundings. Our way to the dining-room lay through the open cloisters; and faint odours of the East touched our nostrils as we passed.

The dinner was the work of an excellent Scotch cook; but it derived a charming and unmistakable local flavour from the early vegetables and the woodcock, from the strong Cyprian wine, from the fine preserved apricots, and from the pale Oriental sweetmeats. The conversation, though very different from that of the afternoon tea-drinkers, was saturated, like theirs, with a local flavour also. Mr. Adam, as I will call the young professor, discussed, in a tone of placid academic refinement, which came to my ears like an echo of an Oxford common-room, the various spots where it might be desirable to excavate, and the various objects which had been unearthed already. Strange names of unknown places and people — men called Demetrius and Georgos, and places called Paraskévi and Morphou — buzzed in my ears like a sort of unintelligible spell. During dessert a basket was brought in full of pre-

historic pottery, with a bronze spear-head in addition—the fruits, as I gathered, of that afternoon's work. Mrs. Adam, though, like Don Juan's mother, "her favourite science was the mathematical," betrayed in discussing these objects the fact that she was a Greek scholar. Colonel Falkland, who had lived much in the East, interwove with his talk about archæology many interesting observations as to the unsuspected power, the politics, and the future of Islam. He explained to us problems of which in the Western world the very existence is hardly so much as dreamed. As he spoke, mysterious regions with sounding legendary names, which had always seemed to me to belong to the land of fable—Armenia, Karamania, and even Thibet and Persia—began for the first time to assume a sort of spectral reality; and when at half-past ten we all of us separated for the night, I felt that my mind, like my body, was moving against a new background. Strange mountains seemed to be towering up around me whose snowy passes shut out the Western world, and I seemed to discern, half-transparent in the air, the gigantic shadowy shapes of new powers and presences.

CHAPTER V

IN A FORGOTTEN CAPITAL

I HAD reached my present quarters in the most charming way possible, having been brought to them practically blindfold; and I awoke next morning with the sense that I was lying in the middle of mystery. Of what the town was like, of what the people were like, or of what sort of sentiment I should find abroad in the air, I hardly knew more than I did when I left London. I lazily looked up at the sloping ceiling above me, which was formed of some fine matting, stretched upon beams of olive wood. My eyes wandered to the unpainted door, on which fanciful iron hinges branched into lean crescents. I glanced at the stone floor, with a thick Persian mat on it. The chest of drawers and the looking-glass I recognised as European.

Presently through the perfect stillness came a long-drawn lilting sound, something like a crow

imitating a town-crier. I turned towards the window, which was close beside my bed, and drew back from it the semi-transparent curtains. The sight of the blue sky at once made me wakeful and vigorous. I rose and I looked out. Before me were the tops of dark and glossy orange trees, with their golden fruitage glittering on them. Then came a gleam of walls, and again more trees beyond them—oranges also, with here and there a cypress—and ending the vista rose a tall feathery palm tree, and close beside it the spike of a slender minaret. The minaret showed me the nature of the sound I had been listening to. It was the voice of the muezzin, still calling from the gallery. Every detail was vividly unfamiliar. A closely-latticed window or two peeped in the distance through the leafage, doubtless looking down upon hidden and inaccessible gardens. Near the minaret was a glimpse of a low white dome, and far away was the peak of a faint silvery mountain.

After breakfast that morning I was left to my own devices. The garden of the house, with its sense of seclusion and secrecy, was so attractive that I felt no impatience to leave it, and I was

pleased at dallying a little longer with my uncertainty as to things outside. I therefore spent the time before luncheon in unpacking a photographic apparatus, and erecting a portable developing room in a quiet corner of the cloisters—an occupation which I lightened occasionally, by pausing to watch the ways of the native servants. In especial, my attention was caught by a curious Greek girl, who rushed to and fro on her business like a good-natured wild animal, and eyed me and my appliances with a laugh of undisguised curiosity. My attention had also been caught by some brilliant flashes of colour, coming and going through the leaves at the far end of the garden; and I at last discovered that these were part of a brown groom called Mustapha, with a white turban and crimson and yellow stockings, who was as tall as a lamp-post, and whose legs were like those of a Chippendale table.

Mrs. Falkland proposed to take me into the town after luncheon, but something happened to occupy her, and I was warned not to go by myself, as I should certainly lose my way, and, not speaking Greek or Turkish, might find myself unable to ask it. About five o'clock, however, Colonel Falkland

returned from his office, and suggested that we should go for a stroll outside the walls to visit something—I did not quite realise what. We went through the garden, and out of a side gate near the stables; and passing along an exceedingly narrow lane, in less than a minute we found ourselves on the ramparts. The slight gray parapets, loopholed for old-world musketry, were broken and ragged, with tufts of weed growing on them. Beyond was an open plain, which stretched away to the bases of far-off mountains. Here and there were a few children playing; a Greek girl passed with a pitcher poised on her head; below a voice called—it came from a shepherd with a crook—an occasional hen ran by, and some wrangling dogs barked.

We went to the edge of the walls, and though the parapets were broken, the sloping surfaces below were in most places as perfect as when—so Colonel Falkland told me—they were built by the Republic of Venice four hundred years ago. Here and there, however, the stone-work had been torn away, and left a practicable descent over the earth and rubble underneath. Down one of these places Colonel Falkland and I scrambled,

and he began to lead me out over a bare tract of plough-land. Presently we paused and looked back at the town. What I saw was a girdle of walls fast growing dim in the evening—walls which at intervals bulged into rounded bastions. Above them peered the eaves of some flat-roofed houses, with some palm trees and one minaret, dark in the clear air. At that short distance nothing more was visible.

Pursuing our walk we arrived in a quarter of an hour at a barren space of ground, littered with fallen building stones, columns and capitals and fragments of carved arches. A cross which caught my attention showed me that the relics were Christian, and a second glance showed me that the building they belonged to had been Gothic. "Here," said Colonel Falkland, "is the site of a palace of the Lusignan kings. In mediæval times this spot was inside the city. Its walls then had three times their present circuit; but the Venetians destroyed them at the time of the Turkish invasion as being too extensive to defend, and instead of them built the present ones. Do you see," he continued, "what this place is now? It is a burying-ground —the Armenian burying-ground." As he spoke he

pointed first to a prostrate door jamb, then to a moulded plinth, then to the mullion of some vanished window, set upright in the earth : and rude crosses cut in them, and inscriptions in the Armenian character, which traversed their original ornamentations, showed me that they were used as grave-stones, and that the dead were resting under them—the ended trouble of life hiding under its ended pride.

Had a poet like Gray been there, he might have written a new elegy, but the scene at this hour seemed to be an elegy in itself. Far away in the west the fading sunset gleamed over a darkening sea-like plain, flanked on either side by lines of converging mountains. A faint breeze came sighing out of the solitude, and passed on to rustle the palm-fronds of the mysterious city. A feeling of sadness rose up out of the earth, with hints of remote races, and the splendours of forgotten history ; and as we walked back over the twilight fields, and through the alleys now black with evening, and found ourselves in the lamplight of Mrs. Falkland's drawing-room, the spirit of the place kept sounding in my mind's ear, faint and plaintive like the voice of an Æolian harp.

After tea Scotty made his appearance, and I agreed to take him into my service. Our dinner that evening was as pleasant as on the night preceding; and my sense of the contrast of things was more keen than ever when a dull tramping was heard in the street outside, and the sound of camel bells came tinkling through the taste of our Scotch broth.

That night I retired to rest with a strange feeling possessing me—who would not be grateful for it were it only his privilege to experience it?—a feeling of escape from the Furies of modern life, disillusion, doubt, and democracy. People often talk of their heart being brought into their mouth. Life in these days brings the hearts of many of us into the Devil's mouth, and he gnaws them as Dante's devil gnawed Judas and Brutus, whilst the eyes and lips of their owners seem to smile with enjoyment. But here was a sudden rest, and peace breathed upon my pillow. Nor was this merely a night's passing illusion. Happy was the light that came to my eyes next morning. Joy came with it, freshness, and expectation. Nothing interfered with my mood except the rapid discovery that

Scotty was not very clever at folding or brushing trousers; and Colonel Falkland's garden, when I came down to breakfast, smelt like the gardens I had known in the morning of boyhood.

Mrs. and Miss Falkland said that at twelve o'clock they would come out with me and give me a glimpse of the unknown world I was living in. When the time came we all of us sallied forth into the street through which I had driven two days previous. It was perfectly silent, but there were a few figures moving in it. The walls of the houses to a height of twelve or fifteen feet were, with rare exceptions, perfectly blind and blank except for doors occurring at wide intervals. Above were irregular windows, many of which projected; and the roofs, which projected still farther, in places nearly touched those opposite to them. Out of this street we passed into another—a narrower one—then into another, and so on into more. Some of them were merely alleys running between high mud-walls, above which peered the leafage of palms or fruit-trees. I felt that it was lucky for me I had not come out by myself. The place seemed as intricate as the Cretan labyrinth, so that very soon I had

completely lost my bearings; and everywhere it was pervaded by a sense of hush and secrecy. The narrower alleys were generally quite deserted, only now and again a grave, bearded figure, in a turban and long robes, went by stealthily; or suddenly round a corner came a white-veiled girl gliding.

As my eyes grew gradually accustomed to the look of things I began to realise a number of strange details. I noticed that though the upper parts of the walls were of mud or of sun-dried brick, the lower parts were mostly of finely-cut ancient stone-work, and that most of the doors were early Gothic arches which might, with their mouldings and their ornaments, have belonged to an English abbey. Here and there, too, in an odd angle was a conduit or fountain that suggested mediæval Europe, and in one place, embedded in a shadowy blank wall, was the chancel end of an exquisite Gothic church. The window, with its mass of florid carving, was perfect; indeed, so to all appearance must the whole structure have been. It was now the barn or stable of some Turkish mansion, and a black Nubian in a white tunic was leaning against it. He eyed us as we passed, as if

he were some enchanted figure. Wherever we went there was the same hush. The ripple of a conduit was often the only voice in the street, and yet all around was a sense of unknown ambushed life.

My own feelings in making this singular ramble recalled to my mind a passage in a certain sensational novel, hardly known even by name to ninety-nine out of a hundred novel-readers. It is a Latin novel of the ancient Roman Empire. It takes us into the heart of a Roman province, into Thessaly, and it shows us the daily life of forgotten luxurious cities—of the hearth, the theatre, and the banquet-room; it shows us country cottages, secluded mills, picnics in shady valleys, and even the by-lanes of those far submerged centuries, with the petals of the dog-roses fluttering on the wayside brambles. Those who have read the book, or have even glanced at it, will know that I mean *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. The hero is the heir of a noble African family, and his one ambition is to be initiated into the mysteries of magic. His mother was a Thessalian, and affairs take him to Thessaly. Now Thessaly at that period was renowned as the special

home of witches. The entire country was a kind of gigantic Brocken, and by the time the young man has arrived at his destination—the house of an old miser in the rich city of Hypata—magic and not business is the thing that fills his brains. "The morning after my arrival," he says, "when the night had been shaken from nature, and a new sun re-created the day, I started from sleep and from bed at the same instant, and, full of the thought that I was now in the very heart of Thessaly, which the whole world celebrates as the native land of enchantment, burning with eagerness and curiosity, I went out and examined everything. And there was nothing in all that city which I could believe to be really what it seemed to be, but I fancied that everything was enchanted and changed into another shape by sorcery, that the stones I tripped against were human beings petrified, that the trees, in the same way, were human beings with leaves on them, and that the pouring waters of the fountains were human lives wasting. Every moment I expected that the statues and the frescoes would begin walking, that the walls would speak, that the oxen and cows would prophesy, and that from the very

heaven itself and the dazzling circle of the sun there would issue some sudden oracle."

I cannot say of Nicosia that I expected to hear oracles in it, but it filled me with precisely the same sense of unreality as that with which Hypata filled the hero of Apuleius. Everything seemed to be something more than it appeared to be on the surface. The air seemed charged with some latent romantic life. Any moment I could have expected to hear the notes of some Oriental love-song or the guitar strings of some wandering troubadour, and my imagination would have been satisfied rather than surprised had there issued from any door some gorgeous crusading knight, grown effeminate in the East, some veiled Circassian beauty, or a disguised caliph with his vizier.

Mrs. Falkland was not an archæologist, and could not tell me much of the history of the Nicosian houses; but there was one house she knew of, of very considerable size, belonging to a certain Melek Jahn, an Armenian, which had been in his family for three hundred years, and of which—in case I wished it—she said she could show me the interior. To this house we accordingly bent our steps.

Though Mrs. Falkland had known Nicosia for years, so intricate are its tangled streets that we twice lost our way. At last, however, we came to the junction of three lanes, where a small mosque and a minaret formed an unmistakable land-mark. Here we turned sharply round by the tomb of a Turkish warrior, adorned with droppings of candle grease and the ends of votive candles, and went up a narrow passage under the shadow of a Franciscan convent. Presently over the opposite walls rose the open arches of a campanile, which Mrs. Falkland told me belonged to the Armenian church, and passing in through a pair of broken gates we were brought by a weedy path to a mouldering stone doorway. The nail-studded doors we pushed open without ceremony, and within we found ourselves in a lofty dilapidated arcade, beyond which glowed the green of a neglected garden. The arcade under which we stood rose the whole height of the house. Its roof was of timber, supported by slim circular columns, and on it looked a succession of dark windows, framed and latticed with woodwork of delicate carving; the doors, which had horse-shoe arches, were masses of carving also; and everywhere

there were traces of bygone taste and splendour. We strayed on into the garden, an acre and a half in extent. Part of it was nothing but a bare space squalid with rubbish; but part was still covered with orange trees, palms, and mulberry trees, various shrubs, and a mat of neglected violets. There was nowhere a sign of life, except from some ragged children who had come in after us, and stared at us from a distance, and from the struggles of an extraordinary hen, which we found tethered to a black-currant bush. As we turned to go, in the middle of an open space I saw lying the broken shaft of a white marble column, evidently the relic of some old Grecian temple; and the next moment, under the green shade of a bush, I discovered also a white Corinthian capital.

My mind, when we reached home, was full of delightfully confused impressions, which I felt I could add to and disentangle at my leisure—minarets, convents, palazzos, and Grecian temples; and they all seemed to be woven like patterns into a sense that the world was out for a holiday, and that life had lost its burden. The strange men and women that we had passed in the street—more or

less consciously I said to myself of each of them that the words *democracy* and *progress*, if uttered to them, would seem as meaningless as they are in reality. And yet, on the thought of these, other thoughts obtruded themselves, which, as we sat down to luncheon, suggested to me this question: Of the two kinds of vision which does the most for man—to see things, or to see through them?

CHAPTER VI

A PURPLE EVENING

PERHAPS that morning I had been too happy, for one of the low troubles of life presently did its best to irritate me. Colonel Falkland proposed at luncheon that we should take a four-mile walk to the place where Mr. Adam was digging for Phœnician crockery. For my own part I hate Phœnicia. It is far too old, like a wine that has lost its flavour, and none of its social abuses are distinct enough to excite sympathy. I therefore assented to the plan with an unexpressed reluctance, and reluctance was changed into very distinct annoyance when I found that we were to start as soon as we had done eating. There was, however, no help for it. Miss Falkland and Mr. Adam were coming, unconscious of any inconvenience, and accordingly four of us were presently setting forth. We had soon quitted

the town by some break in the wall, and I had no time to look for any fresh curiosities. We took a road that led over the bare plain, and when we had passed the first rise in the ground, walls, houses, and minarets were completely hidden from our view. Meanwhile the sky, which had been cloudless all the morning, had grown dim, as it does in an ill-tempered May in England, and in half an hour or so, on a bleak open moor, rain spat in our faces, and thickened into a driving shower. This naturally did not increase my complaisance. All the same, however, I could not help being conscious of the wild purple colours that were settling down over everything, and the mobile way in which level and rocky ridge all about me took the complexion of storm. At last the prospect was relieved by a definite feature, a grove of trees near the road, with some cottages crouching under them. I asked what the place was, and I was told it was the settlement of the lepers. I felt that at all events there was some consolation in that; a foreign feeling at once stole into the rain. A little beyond this we turned off the road, and followed a faint footpath over a series of stony ridges. This brought us to a sloping mud-

built village, with a huge public rubbish heap, and a little Greek church beside it. The walls of the cottages and their precincts were oddly like those in Devonshire, only a glimpse into a farm-yard showed arched colonnades and orange trees. By and by we descended over a dip in the hill on a luxuriant palm garden, surrounding and hiding a house, in which lived a mysterious Turkish lady; and farther on, beyond a stretch of level ground, we saw before us one of those isolated eminences which had caught and surprised my eye as I drove from Larnaca—in plan a rude circle, and at the top absolutely flat. This was the scene of the excavations. By a zigzag path we scrambled up its sloping sides, and an object came in view, which was better than anything I had bargained for. It was the ruin of a solitary square tower, the masonry of which, as we approached it, was seen to be of a most singular character. Externally it was rusticated as if by the workmen of Palladio. Inside, the stones were entirely smooth, and the jointing was so fine as to be very nearly invisible. My own fortuitous guess would have set it down as Italian, but I was told that there were certain signs about it which

proved its extreme antiquity—that it was certainly pre-classical, and probably early Phœnician.

I was anxious to believe, but I confess I was a little incredulous: and looking at the stones, fresh as if cut yesterday, I profanely asked myself if the Phœnicians had ever been in the neighbourhood. I presently saw that my companions had wandered to a little distance, and had joined an Englishman, whom I divined to be Mr. St. John—a young and accomplished scholar, a colleague of Mr. Adam. They were all standing in a group, plainly doing something particular, but I could not tell what till I came close up to them, and I then saw that they were peering into a narrow, open trench. I caught in their voices a certain note of excitement; and looking into the trench myself I discovered a man at the bottom of it, kneeling down, and scratching at the earth with a knife. Some one said to me, "Look, he is coming to something!" And, following the movements of the glimmering steel blade, I saw appear amongst the clay another glimmering surface. It was brown, it was rounded, it had some rude patterns on it; and presently a small bowl was handed up to the archæologists.

The scratching was resumed, and in a minute or two was a like result; then another and another; and before long, in a basket, there was a numerous and growing family of jugs, lamps, and vessels with a spout like tea-pots, most of them oddly diminutive. I asked Mr. Adam what these things were. He knew their character perfectly. They were, without doubt, Phœnician; and as for their size, he said, that told its own story. The trench that had just been opened was the grave of a Phœnician child. My doubts of a moment ago were to some extent wrong anyhow. I had never been present at an occasion like this before, and it changed at once the whole character of the afternoon for me. I did not, as I have said, care sixpence about Phœnicia; but there was something that touched the feelings like a knife or a note of music in seeing, after all these centuries, the earth giving up her dead, and the toys of a child thrown back to the light which had shone on them last before the dawn of history.

I presently left the group, and walked along the brink of the hill, like a dog with a bone, taking this thought away with me. The rain, meanwhile,

had ceased, and the air was soft and fragrant; but the sky was still charged with masses of purple cloud; and a purple, dark as the bloom of the darkest grape, had settled down over the whole of the distant landscape. I almost fancied, as I looked, that I was in the heart of Inverness-shire or of Ross-shire; and a feel of the Scotch Highlands came back to me with a gust of memories. I saw once more the silvery mists of morning, asleep over their own reflections in the glass of gray Loch Shiel: I saw the shining birches of Kinloch-Moidart. I felt the wet and heathery wind of evening, sweeping over the hills from Dalwhinnie to Loch Laggan. I half expected to see on the wide expanse before me the Highland train go by, with its load of autumnal cockneys. Then through these fancies the real landscape asserted itself. Its colour was deeper than any on the hills in Scotland; and, tried by a Scotch standard, there was somewhere something uncanny about it. The clouds lifted over the mountains; and their leagues of spires and summits rose jagged against a clear streak of saffron; resting on Pentedactylon was the base of an immense rainbow, of which so little was visible

that it looked like a luminous leaning column; and where, a moment ago, I had imagined a whistling train, I saw slowly moving a small caravan of camels.

The approach of evening was perceptible when we began our return home. As we descended to the plain, faintly from every quarter came to our ears a tinkling of sheep bells and of goat bells. As the earth grew darker, a wild orange glare answered in the east to the fading embers of the sunset; and against this we saw nameless shaggy figures, homegoing men and women, in unfamiliar clothing, journeying, like phantoms, we none of us knew whither. Who were they—what were they—these nomads of the twilight? To us they seemed like figures out of a poem or Eastern story book; and they suddenly deepened in our minds the sense that we were in a strange land.

Of experiences such as this one thinks less at the time than afterwards. Their meaning unfolds itself as one looks quietly back on them. Then one sees sometimes how foreign places have dyed the mind for ever with foreign colours—how Eastern sunsets and the blue of Mediterranean bays have entered

into the blood, and become part of one's life; and I knew, as I walked home, that thoughts of that purple evening would come back to me hereafter, with many others that go tinkling like sheep-bells across the waste places of memory.

CHAPTER VII

A CITY OF THE CRUSADERS

AT night I took to bed with me a number of books about Cyprus, and tried, till my candles burnt down into their sockets, to put together some coherent history of Nicosia. To begin, I gathered that it was a town of immense antiquity; that it was certainly wealthy and populous before the days of Constantine; that it was then adorned with palaces and beautiful Greek temples; and that gradually side by side with the white Corinthian porticoes rose a splendid crowd of Christian churches and monasteries. When the English crusaders came in their gray armour and seized it, it looked like a vision to their rude European eyes. This happened about 1190. A few years later, under circumstances which I afterwards studied more attentively, and which read exactly like a chapter out of the Waverley Novels, it, and Cyprus with it,

were handed over to Guy de Lusignan, ex-king of Jerusalem.

This Guy, who when he began life was nothing more than a penniless well-born adventurer, having gained and lost one kingdom, here established another, which took root and flourished for 300 years. Of all dynasties known to European history, the career and the position of this is incomparably the most romantic. It represented more than a mere vanishing conquest. In it the chivalry of the West was rapidly acclimatised to the East, and took, like some transplanted flower, new and unknown colours from it. Its counts and its barons, of French and of English ancestry, settled down over the length and breadth of the island, and kept their feudal state amongst spice-gardens and silken luxury. The peasantry never were displaced, nor was the Greek religion interfered with; but side by side with the plain Greek basilicas rose Gothic churches with windows of elaborate tracery. Marvellous abbeys like Fountains, Bolton, or Kirkstall, in distant nooks hid themselves amongst oleanders; and castles like Alnwick or like Bamborough reared their clustering towers on the mountain-tops. But civilisation

there was not merely at home in fortresses. The nobles, like those of Italy, inhabited the towns also: and Nicosia in particular became a city of palaces. Coats of arms familiar to Western heraldry surmounted the street doors, and covered the monuments in the cathedral. The streets in the fourteenth century were alive with gorgeous retinues—with ladies on horses, whose housings glanced with jewels, and knights in velvet bonnets, and mantles clasped with gold. In some of the households were as many as two hundred retainers. In the markets were the finest wines, and the rarest and most delicate provisions. Ice in the heats of summer was on sale always; and the monopoly of it yielded a handsome revenue to the State. In the jewellers' shops were treasures unrivalled throughout the world, and the rich bazaars exhaled the perfumes of the farthest East. Outside the gates, where the wide plains extended, gay and gallant parties would daily ride out hawking. Farther off, near the woods where Adonis died, and where the wild boars still roamed, hounds were kept by the nobles, with huntsmen in brilliant liveries; and the notes of the horn were daily sounding amongst the valleys. And surround-

ing and penetrating this pageant of Western mediæval life was the local colour and flavour, not only of an alien Christianity, but, stranger still, of old classical paganism. In the recesses of the forests were still to be seen gleaming the milk-white columns of many a deserted temple, where the old deities were still believed to linger, metamorphosed into saints or demons. The air was haunted with traditions of Venus. Holy hermits praying high in mountain grottos found that the hills were hollow, and that within was the Goddess of the Horsel.

This is what I gathered about the island before I went to sleep; and my mind was full of it next morning, when, giving my camera to Scotty, I went out to see what I could photograph. I did not believe that all my historical impressions were accurate. I thought that nothing accurate would be nearly so pleasing to the imagination. Still I felt that they gave the place the same kind of interest that might have been given to it by an historical novel. What was my delight, then, when passing along some of the alleys, which here and there I recognised as part of the sights of yesterday, my eye was caught first by a scutcheon let into a wall,

and presently by another surmounting a crumbling doorway! Then I detected others, broken or half-obliterated. They started from their obscurity, and showed themselves in quick succession. What I fancied had been romance was reality after all. I was actually walking through the remains of the mediæval palaces I had been reading about; and the existing houses were built upon their foundations.

But the wonder of the morning was yet to come. The special object of my walk was a mosque, which had once been the cathedral—the only important structure of which I had as yet heard anything definite. Nothing that I had heard, however, had at all prepared me for the reality. After many turns and windings I arrived, under Scotty's guidance, at an open square, with old stone buildings surrounding it and a Gothic fountain in the middle; and close to one of the sides, with pinnacles and flying buttresses, was a mass of windowed masonry which impressed me like York Minster. As it suddenly burst on one its entire aspect was English. It was not till a little later that the eye took note of the differences. I went slowly round it. For one half of the circuit a road, practicable for vehicles,

passed actually through the buttresses, whose arches flung a succession of shadows over it. Every shy corner showed some detail of architectural beauty. No cathedral in England could show more. What struck me most, however, was the great western front, across the whole of which ran a lofty and magnificent portico. The groined roof of this rested on a series of fluted columns, in which were empty niches once filled with statues, and three tall doors of equal size opened from it into the aisles within.

Here I set up my camera; and I had, whilst selecting the best point of view, a good opportunity of watching a stream of worshippers who at short intervals were passing in to their devotions. The dress of some of them was semi-European, but they had for the most part turbans and loose robes. What could their business be, my English mind asked —the business of these strange figures within these familiar-looking doors? My eye instinctively looked for a gowned verger extracting a half-crown from some pleased sight-seeing clergyman, and for demure young ladies mincing in with their prayer-books and parcels of slippers hidden under their arms for the curate. But before the doors barbarous curtains

hung, marked not with crosses, but huge cabalistic symbols; and when these were pushed aside, and a faint sound came from within, it was not the roll of an organ or the flute-like response of choristers, but some long-drawn, hoarse modulation, ending with the name of Allah.

When I had done with my photography I strolled to a distance and again surveyed the pile. I now saw that, in addition to its other ornamentation, it, like the old street walls, was covered with coats of arms, one of which caught my eye for a very curious reason: it was identical with that of an extinct Devonshire family—the Pynes of Axmouth—which in the fifteenth century was connected by marriage with my own, and which, along with my own, has not a few of its members lying side by side under the flag-stones of Axmouth Church. The same device, the same three pine-cones—there looks down upon homely village faces, old-fashioned square pews, and the flowers of Sunday bonnets, which here, amongst alien races, has all its shadows sharpened, by the sky that bends over Paphos, and is cut by the shafts of minarets.

I had plenty of time that afternoon to ruminate

over these impressions, and I also received others of a quite different character. Mrs. Falkland took me about four o'clock to call on one of the judges who lived beyond the walls. We went by a broad road bordered with eucalyptus, which presently took us past the British Government's offices, and showed us, a mile or so off, the tiled residence of the Governor on a small eminence, with more eucalyptus sheltering it. Since I had left the pier at Larnaca these were absolutely the first signs I had met by which Western civilisation made the fact of its presence public. In numerous ways, no doubt, England has done much for Cyprus; but, with rare exceptions, such as these which I now speak of, it has regulated and improved the conditions of native life without producing the least alteration in their character, and a man might wander for days upon days in Nicosia before he encountered a single English face. It is true that on the road we were now traversing clerks and officials—the whole of them few in number—were at stated times to be seen going to or from their work; but, except at such times, whatever life might be stirring, as I found this afternoon, was even here entirely Oriental.

The judge's house, however, which stood at some distance from the road, was amongst the objects tainted with Western progress. It was a stone villa in fact, which had only been built yesterday, with English grates and a porch like an English parsonage. It seemed to profane the landscape, and I was sorry I had set eyes on it till, after a minute or two spent indoors, we were taken out into the garden, and back we were plunged again into all the strangeness of Cyprus, which here showed itself in a fresh and delightful form. The garden was as new as the house, and as yet little labour had been spent upon it ; but already it was enclosed by hedges of trellised creepers, and tall luxuriant shrubs made it green and private. Its beds were rich with a mixture of flowers and kitchen vegetables. Violets, hyacinths, and anemones made borders along the paths, and the soil enclosed by them, though it was yet in the depth of winter, showed beans and potatoes sprouting into exuberant life, huge cauliflowers, spikes of matured asparagus, and rows upon rows of peas, whose pods had been full at Christmas.

By and by we came to the secret of all this fertility—to a well half-hidden by foliage, with a date-

palm standing over it, whose deep waters were raised by a rude Persian wheel. This primitive contrivance in every detail of its structure is probably the same to-day as it was three thousand years ago. The principal wheel is horizontal, turned by an ox or mule, which communicates its motion by another to an endless chain of pitchers—red clay pitchers, fastened by bands of straw to ropes, apparently twisted out of lithe brown twigs, and each of these child-like vessels as it comes to a particular place spills its tribute into a broad wooden shoot. Had the house been out of the question, the garden and well together would have formed a scene in which Ulysses might have found Laertes. Indeed, I felt that the spot was full of the possibilities of classical idyls.

There was something idyllic too—at least I was pleased to think there was—in the golden butter and the cream which were presently offered to us at tea, and which our host and hostess produced from their own farm. At tea, too, I met one of the principal English officials—an accomplished classical scholar and a student of mediæval history, especially of such history as touched the romance of Cyprus—

in whom at once I discerned a kindred spirit. For him, as for myself, I found that the place was haunted, that mediæval hawking parties went with him as he rode over the plains ; that classical forests were green for him on the bare valleys and mountains, and that in their recesses Adonis still went hunting. He told me more in twenty minutes of the things I cared to know than I had learnt hitherto from all other sources of information. I asked him if any castles existed still in the country, and if there were any recognisable fragments of the Latin abbeys I had dreamed about. To both of these questions he answered, yes. He gave me the names of six or seven castles instantly, three of which were perched on the tops of mountains, where their halls and towers now had few visitors but the clouds. My imagination, it seemed, could have asked for nothing better, whilst as for abbeys, in one instance at least, there were more than fragments remaining ; there was a building almost perfect.

My new friend, whom I will speak of as Mr. Matthews, walked home with us, and added to the interest he had excited in me by telling me that he lived in a house which originally was the Latin

archbishop's palace. I mentioned the coats of arms to him which I had been noticing that morning. This was a subject with which he was quite familiar; and he promised to lend me a book which contained the genealogies of most of the Western families settled here during the Middle Ages. I parted from him with a promise that I would call on him, in his palace, in a day or two; and a sense, derived from many of the things he told me, that my historical dreamings had not been dreamt in vain.

The practical reader will possibly call to mind my boast that I came to Cyprus with a reasonable and practical purpose, and will think that, if this were so, I was not very business-like in setting about it. I had, however, already made inquiries as to how the locality of my supposed marble was to be reached; and in case I could wait for a day or two, Mr. Adam had promised to accompany me. The expedition had accordingly been fixed for the following morning. Our mode of conveyance was to be mules; and when we came in that evening Scotty was waiting for us, with a lean, tanned muleteer, in order to settle about our saddles and the hour of starting.

CHAPTER VIII

A DAY OF VIEWS AND VISIONS

WE were down and at breakfast shortly after seven o'clock, for the journey to Pentedactylon would take us at least four hours, and as it seemed that the paths amongst the mountains were not easy to find, we wished to be half-way home again before the daylight faded. Between sips of coffee and mouthfuls of fried bacon, my companion and I alternately studied a map. For the first nine miles or so our route was simple enough. It lay over the plain to a large village called Kythrea. We evidently must go through this village, which was just at the foot of the mountains, but after that point the map could tell us little. In a straight line Pentedactylon was not more than five miles distant from it. The problem was how to reach it through a labyrinth of intervening ridges. Accordingly before us were two elements of uncertainty :

first, should we ever get to the peak in question? and secondly, if we got there, should we discover the precious marble? It is not perhaps a business-like view of the matter, but I confess I was charmed by all this uncertainty. It seasoned the day's prospects with a sense of mimic adventure.

The dining-room door was presently slightly opened, the red cap and the brown nose of Scotty showed themselves, and we listened to this announcement: "The mules and the mule-man he here, sir; he say that we best start, for he not sure of the road." There had before now been a good deal of talk about saddles, from which I gathered nothing except that I should find them peculiar. I was certainly not disappointed. Of the four animals which we found awaiting us in the street, two—those meant for the muleteer and Scotty—had nothing on their backs but squares of gaudy-coloured camel's-hair cloth, kept in place by two curved frames of wood, which were covered with crimson leather, and shaped like the merry-thought of a chicken. Across these were slung a couple of saddle-bags, and rude stirrups attached to a loose rope. Anything more uncomfortable it is hardly possible to imagine;

but for myself and my companion, because of the hardness of our hearts, or perhaps because of the softness of something equally sensitive, the native fashion was modified in the following way: over the saddle was thrown a thick species of feather-bed, which, though halved in size as well as doubled in thickness by being folded, left little of the animal visible, excepting its head and tail. Mr. Adam assured me I should find this arrangement charming; but he had hardly made the statement when I had occasion to doubt it. As he was about to mount, his mule gave a harmless frisk, and feather-bed and stirrups together came floundering off into the dust. They were soon, however, again in their places, with Mr. Adam on top of them, and I too a moment later was in a similar proud position. We had not been long in motion before I made two curious discoveries. One of them was that the use of a Cyprian mule's reins is simply to stop it, and that the whole business of guiding is accomplished by hitting it on one cheek or the other. My other discovery was that if I wished to quicken its paces, it was, owing to the extraordinary covering which I sat upon, as invulnerable to blows as the ghost of

Hamlet's father ; or if—as I have reason to believe, for I could not turn round to see—my stick did occasionally reach some undefended quarter, the only result was not a trot but a kick. However, with the aid of the muleteer, we were soon progressing satisfactorily, and our sixteen hoofs were pattering along the silent streets of Nicosia. We passed the walls of long mysterious gardens with doorways at rare intervals ; we turned round endless corners. Sometimes a bough of oranges or a spray of milk-white blossoms cut the sky overhead, with dew on them glittering in the sunlight. We emerged from these narrow ways into a broader road that ran at the foot of the circling grass-grown ramparts. Here we came on a few moving figures—a shepherd driving to market some straggling sheep, whose fleeces were gray in the early invigorating air, and some Turks with the morning bright on their linen garments. At last we came to one of the city gates—a shadowy stone tunnel, about eighty feet in length, which bulged in the middle into a circular domed chamber, lit, like the Pantheon, by a circular opening in the roof ; and at the end of it hung the same iron-clad doors which had been placed there by Venice

four hundred years ago. Through this tunnel we plunged. For a few seconds the echoes hovered about us, and then we found ourselves launched on the open country.

Never shall I forget the sensations of that moment. We seemed to be issuing out upon the earlier ages of the world. Long luminous hazes were afloat on the plain before us; and here and there in the distance rose a tall patriarchal date-palm. At first we found ourselves in a road, but we almost instantly left it, and took a rude path between unfenced fields and vineyards. Along similar paths, from one direction or another, were groups of peasants whose clothes were patches of blue and crimson, going forth to their work and to their labour. From scattered primitive cottages came a faint barking of dogs. The clods of the earth were still yellow with sunrise, and a far-off silvery column, that came from some burning weeds, was going up like the smoke of the first sacrifice.

When we had ridden in this way for a mile or two, I turned to look back at Nicosia; and I now for the first time had a clear general view of it.

Its long, gray walls lay like a gleaming girdle clasped round a sleeping forest of minarets, palms, and cypresses, with some low domes amongst them, white as wood-anemones, and, looming over all, the bulk of the great cathedral. This was not a time for thinking about architectural details; and the sight produced on me one impression only—that Nicosia was exactly like a picture of Damascus—Damascus, the city old in the days of Abraham, and therefore no anachronism on these patriarchal plains.

As I rode on, under the influence of the scene and hour, paralysed capacities for pleasure tingled and came to life again. Hopes, associations, and illusions which had long littered my mind, dead and motionless as fallen leaves in November, began to stir and rustle like the bones in Ezekiel's valley; and I laughed as I caught myself actually muttering to the air, "Breathe, oh breathe upon these slain, that they may live!"

The air, which I thus apostrophised, though it lost none of its freshness, was meanwhile growing warmer, and the distances more clear; and our eyes fixed themselves on the wall of mountains to

which, in a slant direction, we were now gradually approaching. Detail after detail of pinnacle, crag, and precipice swam into sight, as if fashioned out of oxidised silver, whilst here and there a cloud-shadow made a blue moving stain on them, or a flock of milk-white clouds settled on some aërial peak. One such peak specially caught my attention from its great height, from the savage abruptness of its sides, and the curling vapours about it, which were making it smoke like Sinai. As these rolled away from it, I saw that its extreme summit was marked by a number of pale faltering lines. I pointed this out to my companion. "Ah," he said, "by the way, that is one of the castles of which your friend Matthews was telling you. It is called Baffavento, which means *the defier of storms*, and on one of the towers, which from here is hardly visible, Richard Cœur-de-Lion once planted his standard."

At this, Scotty, who prided himself on his local knowledge, not to be outdone by Mr. Adam, broke into the conversation. "See, sir," he said, "that over there, Kythrea. I came through him last year with a gentleman who want shoot woodcock." I

looked in the direction he indicated, and beginning on a spur of the mountains, and extending thence like a long headland into the plain, I saw at a few miles' distance a blot of the deepest green, above which appeared the tops of a belfry and a minaret, and through which gleamed the white corners of a house or two. As we neared this, we struck into a rough carriage road leading to it, and we presently saw what all the greenness was. On either side there began to be groves of olive trees. Then our ears were caught by the splash and babble of water. We looked, and we saw it glancing on a wall, which proved to be an aqueduct. Then came olive trees planted in more regular order, and under them—not, as is usual, the bare ground strewn with berries, but grass greener and richer than any growing in Jersey, with lazy cattle standing knee-deep in it.

The first glimpse of the village itself surprised me. The road took us into a small triangular *place* surrounded by a farm-yard, and by two or three quaint houses, which were several stories in height, and looked Spanish rather than Oriental. Thus far our way had been perfectly unambiguous, but now began a succession of minor troubles.

Passing out of the *place* by an alley between low buildings, we found ourselves brought up sharp by a stone wall five feet high. We tried another turn, and a lane bordered with brambles brought us to a conduit running between two gardens. Our third attempt carried us somewhat farther; but our course was at last checked, and that by a garden also, where an old woman was washing some petticoats in a drain. Kythrea, in fact, though the largest village in Cyprus—it cannot be much under three miles in length—seemed nothing but a tangle of private paths and water-courses, and it struck us that its houses, which were most of them hidden in foliage, could have no connection with each other, except by a succession of trespasses.

We were well repaid, however, for our slow progress through it, by the series of charming pictures its gardens and groves revealed to us. At the doors of the embowered houses we saw, through the green shade, family groups sitting and talking in the sunshine. Here in the grass lay a basket half filled with wild flowers; there a bevy of children was playing round the silvery olive trunks.

A feeling gradually stole over my mind that during the last ten minutes we had passed into another epoch—from the days of the patriarchs to the days of Hellenic Sicily—from Genesis to the idyls of Theocritus.

This change, as day after day taught me, was one of the things most characteristic of Cyprus. Like the fruit of the durian, which has flavours of all foods, Cyprus has flavours of all epochs and literatures, and has every mood in its sky, its air, and its scenery. We at last reached a path by the brink of a small canal, which both went curving together between walls of towering reeds, the very same reeds that whispered, "Midas has no ears;" and this brought us to the upper part of the village, which climbed from the plain over a low spur of the mountains.

Everything now underwent another change. We left the green behind, and great brown hills came sloping down on us with the bare sky on their ridges. Our road was no longer doubtful—if, indeed, it could be called a road, for what lay before us was simply a track of mud running along one of the hill-sides, and sloping like the roof of a

house. Such, however, was here the main thoroughfare of Kythrea, and along it, at irregular elevations and intervals, were mud-houses, each with a small loggia, whose pointed arches showed sharp against their own internal shadows.

Presently we heard a buzzing noise in the air, and just below us we saw the roof of a corn mill. A little further on, by a zigzag stone causeway we descended into a miniature gorge, with a brook and a bridge, and another mill at the bottom of it. In the shadow of a dark arch we saw the flicker of the swiftly revolving millstone, and from an opening in the wall the water came tumbling out like wool. Out of this dip we ascended by a climbing street, with paved steps like those of the mountain towns of Italy. We passed a vine-trellised café, which revealed a floor within covered with a regiment of chibouks, all in readiness for the afternoon smokers. Higher up we reached a cluster of sycamores, under which was another café, with benches on a rude balcony, and the host with fierce moustache sipping some red wine. Round the corner of this we turned sharp into a lane which ascended the hill, steep as a garret

staircase. Everywhere it seemed that the slope was traversed by aqueducts, leading away towards the village, or spilling themselves into white-walled cisterns, and somewhere far down was the murmur of more millstones. When we issued from the lane, which was walled upon each side, there was only in front of us one lonely cottage, and after that we found ourselves in the heart of the mountains.

For some forty minutes we wound among brown stony acclivities, quite bare of vegetation, and beautified by nothing but the sunlight. Then we issued on a high irregular table-land, with rich-looking red soil, dotted with dark-green caroub trees, tufted with myrtle, and sparkling with lime-stone fragments. Beyond this rose a range of limestone ridges, broken, as we presently found, into a multitude of crooked gorges, and through these we began slowly to take our intricate way. Rock-strewn streams ran by us, and on every side from fissure or silvery ledge young pines were sprouting, and here and there was a cypress. The small noise of the waters came sharp and clear to our ears, and brought home to us the deep silence of the wilderness, which once or twice was made

even more profound by a far-off tinkle from the bell of some clambering goat.

All this while we were working our way upwards, and the air each moment grew rarer and more exciting. Little puffs of wind came cool and fresh on our cheeks, and scents like thyme and myrtle were breathing on every side of us. In due time the summit of this range was arrived at. Before us was a shallow descent, beyond it a rising slope, and above this, like a castle, the summit of Pentedactylon. It was a singular object. Its sides seemed to be absolutely precipitous, and its five peaks, on a nearer view of them, still retained their likeness to five distended fingers. Here we halted and scrutinised the slopes to right and left of it. We sought everywhere for the signs which my friend had mentioned—the ruined church, the great solitary cypress-tree, the dark mouth of the cave, and the orange-coloured wall of rocks. But not one of these things could we see anywhere. I had imagined that when once we were in their neighbourhood we should instantly recognise all of them. We appealed to the muleteer. He said he had been there before, but he had never heard of any church,

or any cave, or of any cypress. I asked him, through Scotty, if he had ever heard of a spring. His face brightened a little. Of a spring he thought he had heard, and he thought it was somewhere a mile or so to the left. A distinct path led in that direction, lying like a thread amongst boulders and green bushes, and disappearing over the sky line. This we accordingly took, watching the peak as we went, and hoping that a cave or a cypress would show itself round some corner. I was thus employed when something distracted my attention, and looking before me, my eyes were met by a spectacle which sent caves, marbles, and cypresses for the time being to the winds. Facing me, through a pass with walls of gray limestone, blue like a wild hyacinth, was the misty, sparkling sea, and beyond it, peak upon peak of glittering snows and shadows, hung in the air the mountains of Asia Minor. I am not much given to quoting Greek in company; but as my companion was a scholar, the impulse may perhaps be excused me which made me in surprise and delight shout aloud to him, Θάλαττα! Θάλαττα!

As often as I think now of that glorious vision,

the thrill it produced in me still repeats itself. Part of it was due to the mere sensuous qualities of what I looked at—to the colour, the crisp outlines, the bold gigantic distances—but as much or more was due to a multitude of vague associations, which suddenly rose in my mind like a swarm of disturbed bees. Asia Minor—the very name was a spell. The whole lyre of classical poetry trembled at it through all its strings. Beyond those distant peaks, Apollo, Pan, and Marsyas made their music amongst the Phrygian highlands; and "bound about with trees," as Catullus sings, there too, under Dindymus, were the "shadowy places" of Cybele; whilst far to the north-west, the white wild swans of Ovid fluted their dying songs to the reeds and shallows of Mæander. Snatches of hexameters and pentameters, mixed with English melodies—sometimes many together, sometimes singly—like notes loosened by the different stops of an organ, filled my mind with a tumult of noiseless music, as I breathed the breath of the wild thyme and the myrtle. Literature, I have always thought, is in most places and companies a singularly dull and uninteresting thing to talk about, but one may, as

a rule, hate literary conversation, and yet at the right moment, with all its powers of feeling, the mind in silence may feel what it owes to literature. To the poets, whose verses at that moment came to me, no acknowledgment, I felt and I feel, could have been excessive. Let me pay my tribute to all of them—in especial, I think, to Catullus, to Shelley, and Matthew Arnold. It is only at moments like these that one feels all they have done for one. Then, looking around the mind's temple, one sees that on every column they have hung an unwithering chaplet.

It takes some time to describe all this, but it took less to experience it, for, as Hobbes says, "thought is quick." I had stopped my brute of a mule, in order to enjoy my feelings; and I now suggested to Mr. Adam that this would be a good place for our luncheon. He assented. We seated ourselves on some tufts of aromatic herbage, and a gray stone was our table. Our food—for even eating at times has a poetry in it which touches the imagination—seemed to be full of the taste of the world's youth. There were meat, bread, figs, and primitive cream cheese, wrapped carefully in

cool, fresh plantain leaves. It was a repast that might have been eaten without surprise by Abraham—all but some slices of excellent cold plum pudding, which he, no doubt, would have kept, in order that he might show them to Sarah.

Across the leaves, between the silvery boulders, between tufts of broom, and the bells of fine wild anemones, my eyes, as I reposed myself, kept turning towards the sea; and it invaded my mind with a new train of reflections. As I looked and looked, there seemed to be a heavy voluptuous bloom on it, which held some passionate secret. One sail, far off, lay like a petal of apple-blossom on it; or it might have been the shell on which Aphrodite stood when the winds drifted her over these very waters. Why natural objects suggest human emotion is a difficult question, probably with a complicated answer. But any one who had cared to look long at that blue surface, drowsy under the touch of a breeze, which caressed it lightly at intervals, would have seen in it some suggestion of that hunger or aspiration, of which for man "the Eternal Feminine" is at once the cause and the symbol. The coast was far below us,

and I could not see it; but I felt that along it there ought to be snowy temples, with columns between whose marble the living waters sparkled, and with capitals where the shadows clung sharp to the carved acanthus leaves.

The mundane taste of a cigarette conjured me back from dreamland; but the Asian coast, when I came to reflect longer about it, recalled to me what I believe are facts, almost as strange as dreams. For the country behind, and under those great snow mountains that were opposite to me, is literally to this day a country of unexhausted mysteries. Wonderful cities of the superbest days of Rome still exist there, in the hearts of untrodden forests, of which some have been visited only by single travellers, some never visited at all, but only seen from a distance, whilst some are known of only by rumour and local legend. Even on routes which, comparatively speaking, are familiar, the unexpected is always lying in wait for one. Obscure Turkish villages stand upon broken palaces; and passing guests in rude reed-thatched hovels have discovered that the roofs rested on columns of verd antique. On lonely mountain roads detached

masses of rock are found cut into towers, with sepulchral chambers on the summit; and by the road-side in one gorge is a great Roman sarcophagus, with a winged lion in marble, keeping guard over the lid. As to details and places, I confess I was somewhat hazy; but I knew enough to excite my antiquarian sympathies; and I felt a longing to charter a Greek caïque, to cross the intervening sea, and plunge into the regions of the marvellous.

But a glance at my watch warned me that time was pressing; and, instead of thinking of verd antique in Asia, I remembered that at the moment my object was to find it in Cyprus. Mr. Adam and I, therefore, now began to scramble in various directions over the uneven ground, making from one point and another a number of geological surveys. But we could see nowhere any of the signs we were in search of, and the muleteer was completely at fault as to the spring. At last, however, as I was straying along a steep track, I saw at my feet a small green fragment, of the very same kind as that which my friend had given me. I went on, and presently found another. Then the track turned sharp round an angle of rock, and once more the

extraordinary charm of the view quite distracted my mind from the frivolities of practical business. Above me the mountains rose for a hundred or a hundred and fifty feet, and below me for three thousand they plunged, at one descent, down to their base in a torrent of rocks and firs and myrtles. Their base was formed by a level belt of country, wooded and cultivated, about a mile in breadth. Against its indented edge the white ripples were breaking, and some miles to the westward, glittering on a miniature promontory, was a little seaport, the name of which I knew to be Kyrenia, flanked by a large square fortress, which I remembered to have heard of as mediæval.

In spite of the view, however, I soon recovered my energies; and being duly armed with a geologist's hammer, I struggled along the side of the slope, through bushes and over boulders, hitting and chipping in all directions. But nowhere did my blows lay bare anything green below. I did not even find any more of the green fragments. I was not unnaturally to a certain extent disappointed; but one half of my mind was again playing truant, and amusing itself with fancies which had little connec-

tion with reality. What set these fancies going was a cluster of oleanders, which, together with some myrtles close to them, looked as if they belonged to a garden, and suggested some solitary fragment of luxurious European life. With the eye of fancy I saw above the myrtles the corner of a pale balustrade, and a marble vase with an aloe in it; below me, catching the sunlight on some winding path, I saw the glimmer of some dainty feminine figure, and the charming movement of a bright Parisian parasol; and presently, still to the same eye of fancy, the statues and terraces of a Palladian villa revealed themselves. For any man rich enough to overcome the practical inconveniences of remoteness, what a winter paradise might be created in these solitudes! Civilisation is never so charming as when it is an island in the middle of simplicity, or of a civilisation of an alien kind. A villa here might be filled, by raids on the opposite coast, with pillars, statues, and pavements from those old forgotten cities; and slabs might feel again the touch of a woman's shoe, which have for two thousand years known only the movement of the snake or of the lizard. East and West, old and new, might meet here under

porticoes and painted ceilings. And the life without! On the slopes and mountains near, never a tourist, or a tourist's hotel, or an advertisement, or the sound or the knowledge of such a thing as a political meeting; but only sunburnt figures, in bright unfamiliar garments, with a strange language, living on strange beliefs, and making one feel as if the whole background of life were a child's holiday, or a back scene in an opera. Perhaps this too was a fancy; but it certainly seemed to me that one's own life lived under such conditions would yield clearer music than it can do in modern Europe; that all its chords would sound—at least whilst the conditions were new—as if there had been drawn across them the bow of a violoncello.

However, to descend again to practical matters, I found on coming back to the spot where our mules were left, that the muleteer had been in conversation with a goat-herd, and had learnt from him that some two miles farther on there were without doubt a ruined church and a spring, though nothing was said about either a cave or a cypress tree. We accordingly mounted, and went at a brisk trot along a path, which for some distance traversed the side

of the mountain, directly above the one from which I had just returned. At last, with many zigzags, it led us into a winding valley, formed by a deep irregular cleft among the mountain-tops, and thickly wooded with pines and luxuriant undergrowth. In the heart of this valley we came on a grove of sycamores. At their roots was a small ruinous cistern, into which trickled a feeble stream of water; and a few yards up the slope was the apse of a broken chancel. Here we dismounted, and I and Mr. Adam, each armed with a hammer, again began our explorations—but with no better result. We accordingly agreed that, so far as the marble was concerned, we had come to the wrong place, and that the day's work was a failure; and we proceeded—I must say not at my own suggestion—to attempt a short cut home by the contemptible light of reason.

Slowly ascending the closed end of the valley, we found ourselves finally on the highest ridge of the mountains; and far below us, beyond a multitude of lesser ranges, extended the great plains we had ridden across that morning, with Nicosia, like a faint mark, in the middle of them. The descent was long. We went four miles out of our way, and

had it been dark we should have gone straight over a precipice. By the time we found ourselves again in the difficult thoroughfares of Kythrea the light was waning. By the time we emerged from them it was dusk. The plains were purple; the by-ways had ceased to be distinguishable, so we urged our animals home by the dusty and stony carriage road. As we were nearing Nicosia, I glanced to one side of me, and was astonished at the sharpness of the shadows which I and my mule were casting. I looked up, and I saw that in the clear liquid sky the moon was now mistress, and was shining in all her brilliance. The bastions of the town gleamed as we passed under them. The passage of the gate was like midnight. Within the streets were silent. Scotty rode ahead of us, as he alone knew the way. We trotted after him through a series of black alleys, lit only by a lantern at rare intervals. Once or twice we detected, as we passed close to them, long-robed Oriental figures gliding silently by the walls. A kneeling camel waved its shadowy neck at us. Dogs barked, and the buildings faintly echoed. At last came a welcome sight. Scotty checked his mule, and I realised with delight that we were at

Colonel Falkland's door. I was stiff and tired; my expedition had failed in its object, and yet the day had been one—I will not say full of happiness, but full of the best of the illusions which make the absence of happiness forgotten.

CHAPTER IX

A CHARMED LIFE

I NOW realised, with regard to the precious marble, that to find a nameless spot on a range of unfrequented mountains was not so easy a task as I had first fondly imagined it. I resolved, therefore, that, before making any more expeditions myself, I would send Scotty, with some villager of Kythrea, to reconnoitre, and find, if he could, the group of objects that had been described to me—the ruined church, the cave, the spring, and the cypress tree. It was some days, however, before I put my plan into execution. The strangeness of the life around me, I confess, I found far more interesting than thoughts of the most lucrative business; and I gave myself up for a time to the pleasures of exploring Nicosia, and to quiet cloistral mornings in Colonel Falkland's garden.

Day by day, hour by hour, the charm of the place

sank deeper and deeper into me, like warmth into cold limbs, or the approaches of sleep into tired limbs; and further and further it quietly put away from me all the cares belonging to what is commonly called reality. Who does not know the delight of sleep that is conscious of itself? There is the same sort of delight in strange surroundings, as they gradually become familiar, and yet leave us conscious of their strangeness. There is the same sort of delight, and another delight added to it. Sleep is only an anodyne; but these strange surroundings are at once an anodyne and a stimulant. Perhaps after a time one's own life, by being lived amongst them, would rub away the bloom of their freshness, and cover them gradually with some precipitate of its own weariness. But there is a long interval before this happens, during which familiarity with the strangeness only makes it stranger, and completes, cell by cell, a new environment for our life. Then, as we look round us, our ordinary lot is inverted. We have slipped, for the time being, from the husk of our past experiences; and the world shows us our dreams and illusions reflected, instead of showing us our dreams and illusions destroyed. This,

as I have said already, is the true end of travelling—this unnatural transmigration of the soul into a new body of circumstance; this flight from the life to which birth happens to have married one, to the arms, the lips, the eyes, of a life and land with which legitimately one has nothing at all to do.

The severe scientific moralist, armed with terrible phrases about the social organism, and Humanity, and our natural sympathy with our kind, will call this pleasure immoral and anti-social. I have no wish to maintain that in his eyes it can be otherwise; for an essential part of it is the complete escape it offers us from him, and from all the conditions that have produced him and made him intelligible. The moralist of the type of Mr. Herbert Spencer, the scientific moralist, whose dogmatism about man in the abstract is based for the most part on a guileless and scholarly ignorance of the ways and passions of men and women in the concrete, amuses himself with the idea that pleasures become more pleasurable in proportion as we know them to be shared by a number of other people. I can assure him that the pleasures of the true traveller are great in proportion as he has them all to himself, or at all

events in proportion as the general public is debarred from them. Another element in these pleasures is even more scandalous, and that element is absence of social duties. The true traveller has never reached the goal of his travels till he reaches a land in which all such duties vanish—even the suggestion of them. Then the spell begins to be woven round him. The men and women he sees are no longer fellow-citizens, but figures moving in a magician's crystal. The streets and gardens he passes through all belong to fairyland, and take the colour of his own longings and fancies, just like the woman seen by Faust on the Brocken, who to each man looking at her had the likeness of the woman he loved. We are, in fact, under happy circumstances such as these redeemed for a little from what life has done to us, and we walk amongst images of what we once hoped it would be.

Most of us must for moments have known what this feeling is; for it is not always necessary to go into distant countries to experience it. It will come to us for moments in more familiar haunts—in gay Mediterranean watering-places, on light-hearted azure mornings, when bands play, when

coloured awnings glitter, and life seems made up of the sway of palm trees, and the movement of music in the air. Again for moments it will come to us in the palm gardens of fantastic villas, when the roses are awake in the warm winter moonlight, when the fountains trickle, when the frogs croak, and the flowers, the air, and the leaves seem bursting with some lost secret. Who that has known such scenes, under favourable circumstances, and in favourable company, has not been conscious of some such impression? Who has not felt a sensation as if something were about to happen—a passionate something—a something which the nerves call for, but the imagination cannot give shape to? Do we wish that some woman should be born out of the palms and the roses, with the breath of the rose on her lips, and the languor of the moonlight in her eyes? The strings of the heart are strained. What is wanting to strike the music out of them? The voice of the nightingale seems to repeat the question; but not even love quite answers it.

Still, in spite of their incompleteness, perhaps even because of it, moments like these are charming, and colour life for years with memories of their

short abandonment. But in familiar scenes the abandonment is short only. In scenes that are strange and remote, it is prolonged from month to month ; and as it is less violent, one is able, without any conscious folly, to let it penetrate and change, for the time, one's whole character. Thus at Nicosia a quiet, sustained excitement tingled through my entire days, and gave me nights of childhood. I made no effort to put practical thoughts away from me. On the contrary, during a certain part of the mornings I used to read some treatises on Political Economy ; but my practical thoughts—thoughts about rent, and value, wages, profits, and poverty—all these moved against an unpractical background. Life, in fact, lay upon dreams like rose-leaves ; and I daily wandered for hours about the enchanted town, and gathered the materials out of which the dreams were made.

And of what did these materials consist ? What were the sights and experiences which my daily wanderings yielded me ? There were only a few of them that would bear detailed description, or make any figure in a tourist's guide-book. One of them—the cathedral—I have described already. Next to

that in importance, beyond all doubt, was the bazaar. To this I was introduced by Mrs. Falkland the day after my return from Pentedactylon. I had constantly heard her mention it; but, for some reason or other, I had conceived the idea that it would be modern and uninteresting; that the young Government clerks, in tweed suits, who were wholly invisible elsewhere, would be seen sauntering there; that Singer's sewing machines and Chocolate Menier would be advertised; and that Huntley and Palmer's biscuits and cheap English stationery would annoy the eye in shops that aped the glass windows of Europe. I was never more mistaken. If anything in Nicosia was like the old world and a story-book, I found that amongst these things the bazaar was to be reckoned foremost; and amongst these things it was in one way wholly singular. The rest of the town, with its mouldering ramparts, its cathedral, its mosques, and its secret tortuous streets, had shown me the past, embalmed or asleep or ruinous. In the bazaar I found it full of animation and movement.

Having threaded with Mrs. Falkland a labyrinth of silent alleys, we emerged suddenly, through an aperture between an old house and a minaret, into

a wide street, lined with low-vaulted warehouses, their arched doors being all of them wide open, and showing within a row of shadowy caverns. In the middle of the roadway donkeys were pattering to and fro; and we almost ran against a bare-legged itinerant tinker, who was about to set up his shop at the foot of a blank wall. On either side in front of the warehouse doors the ground was littered with primitive bales of goods; and amongst these, being laden or unladen, groups of camels stood patiently in the sunlight, with red caps and turbans moving and glancing round them. At the end of this street, which seemed like a *cul-de-sac*, was a large fig tree having a Turkish tomb under its branches; but passing round this we were faced by a covered passage, flickering with lights and shadows, which ran away into a wilderness of old stone buildings, and into and out of which, like ants at the entrance of their nest, men and women, with a sort of busy dilatoriness, were constantly coming and going. This was the entrance of the bazaar proper; or rather one of the entrances, for the passage now before us was only one out of many. The bazaar was a spider's web of them.

Externally the view was of no architectural interest; but the moment one entered one was in a world of the curious and picturesque. This particular passage or street happened to be that of the silversmiths. As I looked round me and began to realise the scene, I felt that we were back again at the beginnings of civilisation. The little shops were a succession of open rooms or cells, black with shadow through which the rude walls glimmered, and on the walls a shelf or two and some implements hanging by nails: and at the mouth of each cell, on a wooden stool, sat the proprietor industriously working at his craft, with a charcoal forge making a dim glow at his elbow. Some were fashioning candlesticks, some buckles; and one was finishing the crook of a bishop's crosier.

At the end of this street was the meeting-place of several others. They were all covered in one way or another, some with tattered awnings of canvas or coarse matting, which made stripes above one of blackness and blinding sky, some with stone vaulting, and some with a trellis-work of vines. One was the street of drapers, and this we entered first. It seemed, as one looked down it, to flutter from end to

end with gay-coloured triumphal flags, which were really stuffs for sale—veils, gorgeous handkerchiefs, and beautiful native silks. The shops themselves were for the most part vaulted, and looked like a series of chapels with one wall wanting. The dark interiors of some were piled high with goods ; others revealed in operation the processes of primitive manufacture. Here would be three men stitching the shaggy capotes of the shepherds ; here another, shaping red fez caps over gleaming copper moulds ; and here on a low platform, jutting a little into the roadway, a Nubian boy lying almost flat on his stomach, and quilting a coverlet of brilliant white and purple. And at the entrance of every shop was —I was going to say the shopkeeper, but the name sounds far too modern—it is better to say the merchant. Here was an almond-eyed Greek twitching with grimaces and vivacity ; there an old Turk squatting superbly calm, like a wax figure moving to slow clockwork, alternately sucking at the amber mouthpiece of his chibouk and stretching a hand with a huge turquoise ring on it over a chafing-dish of live charcoal, looking as if, for him, customers had no existence.

One mentions all this quickly, and then one passes on. But the eye lingered as words cannot linger, as if it would feed on everything and never could have enough—on the masses of quaint detail shining and glimmering in the foreground, on the dimmer objects swimming slowly into sight out of the shadow, on the clear shadows melting into impenetrable darkness, and on all the luminous colours in movement or hanging stationary. Had I only been an artist, I should have longed to be painting everything, and thus to seize it and make its beauty my own.

Passing from this street into another, the longing grew even keener. I felt as if I were in a gallery of living Rembrandts or Van Ostades. What we had entered was the street of the grocers. Here the subdued light flickered on bunches of yellow candles, destined for burning at Christian or Moslem shrines, on huge oil-jars in which the Forty Thieves might have hidden, and on piles of globular cheeses with madder-coloured rinds. They all caught the eye, painted on deep shadow. Then from this street we passed into that of the fruiterers and the sweetmeat-sellers. The change was like that of passing to the

works of some other Dutchman. Here in shadow that was browner and more translucent was the fresh greenness of vegetables. There were the wrinkled leaves of cabbages and the faces of creamy cauliflowers, and here and there the whole place was illuminated by piles of pale gold lemons, of fiery-red tomatoes, and rose-coloured stacks of radishes. Farther on one came upon trays of comfits, on gelatinous strips of *nougat*, and great masses of a peculiar pallid sweetmeat, of the colour and the texture of putty, with the large knives sticking in it, that were ready to cut it into slices.

In another street we came upon the shops of the barbers, bare to the public eye as the interior of a doll's house; and not far off were rows upon rows of cafés—deep vaulted rooms, entirely open to the roadway, and showing within, dark in the swarthy twilight, long groups carousing at wooden tables. Not far from these was the more squalid quarter of the shoemakers, where all down an inky alley busy hands were glancing, and boots brown and black, and slippers crimson and yellow, dangled in front of what were less like shops than sheds. Somewhere too in the same neighbourhood a sharp turn

brought one amongst the smiths and the iron-workers, where black puffs of vapour floated faintly amongst the awnings, and far away in the gloom forges spat and sparkled.

And through these shadowy ways, from early morning to dusk, the most motley throng kept moving. Greeks and Armenians, in dark, tight-fitting clothing, jostled their way amongst turbans and flowing robes, amongst blue and green and orange colour. Old crones, with silvery hair and faces creased like medlars, tottered along with baskets on their feeble heads; by them went girls, tall and with heads erect, on which were supported jars brimming with water; and slowly gliding in and out of the crowd were veiled Turkish women, muffled in white like ghosts, showing nothing but the gleam of their dark eyes, and attended sometimes by a negro black as ebony. Occasionally the mass would be pressed together and parted by a patriarch with a beard of snow solemnly enthroned on a donkey between coloured saddle-bags; and occasionally through the reluctantly formed opening a cart would come, drawn by bullocks, with their huge horns swaying. Then, as one watched

and waited, other sights would reveal themselves. Little brown-legged boys would skip by with trays of coffee, which the cafés sent out to the shops; and bakers' men would appear, going more circumspectly, carrying on their heads long trays like planks, each with its row of loaves smelling fresh from the oven.

Of Oriental bazaars that at Cairo is commonly supposed to be the most interesting, and of course in scale and in value and variety of merchandise this of Nicosia cannot for an instance be compared to it. But if the two are judged by the impressions they produce on the mind the advantage is the other way. In the bazaar at Cairo the stranger perforce wanders, accompanied by a *banal* consciousness of the neighbourhood of Shepheard's Hotel, or else at every corner he encounters the inhabitants of it. Cockney and Yankee accents clash in the air close to him, and hands in every direction are red with "Murray's" and "Baedeker's." The existence of the modern world is in no way eclipsed in his mind: the scene seems rather by contrast to bring it into jarring prominence. But in the bazaar of Nicosia everything conspired to make the modern world

forgotten. In every sight, in every sound, in the very air itself, there was the flavour of another civilisation and of other centuries—one might almost say of another world. The men who passed were every one of them men who might have seen djins or effreets, have been wrecked on the Loadstone Mountain, or done wonders with talismans. There was not a face that might not have seen marvels, and probably not a heart that did not implicitly believe in them; and the knowledge that this was so, through the quick action of sympathy, wrapped me round myself with the same mysterious atmosphere.

Cairo, again, cannot, nor can any other town that I know of, offer anything comparable to the following experience, with which my first day's visit to the Nicosia bazaar concluded. After wandering about with me for a considerable time, Mrs. Falkland paused before a low squalid-looking arch, which divided two shops, and said, "We will come this way." Plunging through the arch, we emerged under the open sky amongst some outhouses, in a passage which seemed to lead only to somebody's back door. At the end, however, it took a sudden

turn. We advanced a few paces, we passed through another arch, and we found ourselves under the shadows of the flying buttresses of the cathedral. It seemed as if in a moment we had travelled three thousand miles. We were surrounded by a vision of silent mediæval Europe. The pinnacles soared above us, and the coats of arms looked down on us.

To both these scenes I again and again returned, the imagination each time taking a fresh draught from them as from a well, and colouring my thoughts afterwards as I sat in my host's cloisters and watched his orange leaves tremble and heard his fountain splash.

Another of the sights of Nicosia—of the sights which the tourist would call such—was a ruinous pile of buildings, which is now called the Konak—that is to say, the Turkish Government offices—but which was once a palace of the kings of the House of Lusignan, and earlier still of the Byzantine Dukes of Cyprus. Its principal entrance opened on a large irregular *place*, and the external view of it was not impressive or interesting. It consisted simply of a long blind wall, patched with mud and ragged at the top, in the middle of which was

a tower with a Gothic doorway. The dilapidated doors were not fastened, and Colonel Falkland, who was my guide, unceremoniously pushed them open. Inside was a guard-room with a heavy groined roof, beyond this was another, and then came a long court, surrounded by crumbling buildings that had been used by the Turks as barracks. Of these a part was modern, and consequently already in ruins; but amongst this, and under this, were many parts that were ancient—solid stone staircases climbing to roofless chambers, and halls with ponderous vaulting, of which some were Byzantine. Nothing, however, retained any marked architectural character. All beauties of form and proportion had been lost, most likely for centuries. But the extent still remained of the labyrinthine structure—chamber after chamber, chapels, baths, and banquet halls, faintly and plaintively proclaiming to the eye what they had been, and reminding one by their silence of the life that had for ever left them. Oranges laid their cheeks against walls where had once been frescoes, and the long roofless corridors were carpeted now with violets. I said that the place had no architectural feature.

As I was turning to leave it, however, I found that it had one. This was the inner side of the entrance tower. Over the door was a magnificent coat of arms—that of the Lusignans—surmounted by a crown and a helmet; and over this was a window which, the moment I set eyes on it, gave to the whole scene a new soul and sentiment. The lower part was defaced, battered, and broken, choked with bricks and ragged Venetian shutters, but its upper part was as perfect as in the days of its glory—a great Gothic arch filled with exquisite tracery.

The impression I took away with me was one of confused sadness. I little knew what sadness, of a very definite kind, had been near me all the while amongst that desolation and silence, and that I should see it face to face on the occasion of my second visit.

And now that I have mentioned the Konak, the ramparts, the bazaar, and the cathedral, the tourist's sights of Nicosia have, I think, all been enumerated. But the other sights—sights that slowly showed themselves and gave the place its character by a series of delicate touches, each

dependent for its force on its surroundings as much as on itself—these were innumerable, and can be described only by specimens. They were, in fact, not so much sights as experiences; and every day yielded a fresh crop of them.

One afternoon, for instance, in a street that was then strange to me, I caught, through an open doorway, a glimpse of a long cloister. Slanting sunlight was coming in through its arches, together with some orange boughs and banana trees, out of an unseen garden. I ventured in, with the feeling of a timid trespasser. Directly within the entrance, dim in the vaulted shadow, was a door, surmounted by a mass of intricate carving. At each extremity of the device was a quaint heraldic lion, and in the middle I detected the heads and the wings of angels. I advanced into the cloister. The sleepy garden revealed itself, and on the other side a series of whitewashed cells, each with a bed, a chair, and a bare wooden table. I now realised that I was in some Greek monastic establishment. Presently an old priest, having a long silvery beard and wearing a cassock and a high brimless hat, came towards me, and asked me by smiles and

signs if I should like to visit the interior of the church. I assented. He took me to the door with the carvings over it. He pushed it open and I entered. I started. The incense-smelling twilight in which I found myself was a-glimmer with gold and paintings! The actual structure was severely simple. It consisted of three aisles, of which the middle one was lit by a low dome, and the plain-cut stone-work was bare of all ornamentation. But the pulpit stood upon shafts of brilliant gilding, and blue and crimson saints looked down from its sides. There were rows of stalls, with fantastic gilded canopies; and before the unseen altar was a great towering screen, gilt also, and gorgeous with the whole army of martyrs. Overhead from the roof depended antique crystal chandeliers, and on an illuminated reading-desk were the Gospels, bound in embossed silver. The priest had remained outside. There was a profound stillness round me, and my first impression was that I was alone. Presently a faint sound called my attention to the chancel, and I perceived that before the screen were innumerable hanging lamps, and that a silent acolyte was lighting them one by

one. I felt a longing to linger; an influence in the stillness detained me. The faint smell of incense, in the strange way peculiar to it, filled the air with a sense of contrition and sorrow and aspiration, of burdens taken away, and of hopes set free to rise again. Are there no burdens borne by the modern world? And if it has them, where will it lay them down?

When I went out the old priest was seated on a bench by the entrance. About him was a group of neophytes, who were being brought up for the priesthood. Some of the young faces were commonplace and stupid enough; but on others was the expression which once, with a fulness of meaning, deluded men were accustomed to call spiritual. Happy, I thought, compared with the lot of many of us, was the lot that lay before them. For them in this secret nook the ages of faith survived. All their years the soul would remain a reality for them; prayer would never seem to them a waste of despairing breath; heaven would be near them, invisible saints around them, and life would still promise something beyond itself, until the day when (as men of science would tell us) death

came to them quietly, bearing the incommunicable disillusion.

Nicosia as a rule, however, breathed lighter thoughts than these, distracting the mind from itself with a mirage of terrestrial beauty. Often I returned alone to the old Armenian house, and mounting to its flat roof looked round me at the city shimmering in the sunshine. Far away were the mountains, pearl-coloured with the haze of noon, and purple shadows, such as lie on a grape cluster, would come creeping down over them beyond the milk-white minarets. On occasions such as these to breathe was like drinking an elixir in which imagination and memory had both dissolved their pearls. It quickened every appetite for sensuous (not sensual) pleasure. The blue of the sky seemed to enter into one's veins ; even the crisp shadows in the cracks of the walls or the columns seemed to be things of beauty ; and one longed to do what the Devil says no man ever does—to say to the passing moment, " Stay ! thou art so fair."

But this is only one memory out of many. How many fresh houses every day did I pass whose antique doors gave glimpses of green and

black shadow, of glossy foliage, and blue, blinding sky! What variety of detail in each of these luminous pictures — cloisters, clambering stairs, running conduits, and vessels of beaten brass! And what changing pictures, dissolved as soon as formed, in the streets! The brown brigand-like shepherd, with the breath about him of the plains and of the mountains; the old majestic Turk, with his long robes with fur; the lean Greek priest, with his unshorn, dangling hair, followed by a bevy of boys with garlands for some saint's shrine; buxom Armenian ladies, with bursting velvet bodices and heart-shaped silver buckles; the muleteer on his mule, with his long lance-like goad; and again, strangest of all, the gliding Turkish women, veiled from head to foot in their flowing yashmaks, which were drawn in at the back so as to show the outlines of the hips, some of them white, and others of silk coloured brilliantly —the meetings, the passings, the successions, of figures such as these, as like and yet as different as the waves of the breaking sea, were like the waves in the pleasure they gave me watching them.

Another of my favourite walks was along the

ramparts. I reached them from Colonel Falkland's house by a lane I have already mentioned, with a fountain in it, at which Greek girls continually were filling their pitchers. The ramparts were only a few paces beyond, and every fine morning on the gray mouldering battlements Turkish women were sunning themselves, like rows of ragged tulips. Nor must I forget another thing, of which the mention of flowers reminds me, and that is the Turkish children. Some of them had their heads covered with shimmering grass-green handkerchiefs, and their petticoats were of golden yellow. Some had crimson head-gear and petticoats of ultramarine. In fact they glittered with all the colours of the rainbow. In the unfrequented lanes of the Turkish quarter one came round corners on little quiet groups of them, sometimes toddling along, sometimes playing together in the middle of the roadway. They looked like bunches of anemones and daffodils, dropped in the dust by some recent passer by.

Again, to go back from human beings to buildings, almost every fresh ramble brought me to some new mosque, to the tree-tops of some new

garden, embowering perhaps a gay pavilion, and to rooms with painted ceilings spanning the road on arches; and, more curious still, amongst the by-lanes, in which I constantly lost myself, used as barns or stables, or places for dogs to litter in, but still covered with carving and beautiful with their pointed windows, one after another I came on mediæval churches—remains of the three hundred for which Nicosia once was celebrated.

And over all was the living and liquid sunlight, sharpening every outline with its broad washes of shadow, filling here and there a window or arch with midnight and giving to every scene a constantly changing character. Sometimes a familiar wall would become a new thing, as a bough laden with leaves or with almond blossoms hung illuminated over it. Sometimes in the crowded bazaar, at the end of one of its dim passages, the eye would suddenly catch the crags of the far-off mountains; and constantly in some narrow, shadowy street, where the tops of the houses were black with their projecting roofs, I stood arrested by the sight of the blue sky at the end of it—an oblong of lapis lazuli inlaid with a dark cypress tree.

I should, however, convey a very incomplete impression if I spoke of Nicosia only as it appeared on the days of sunshine; for though certainly sunshine, at once soft and brilliant, was the rule, clouds and showers were exceptions hardly rare enough to be remarkable. But clouds in that wonderful climate seemed seldom to have any gloom in them. They were as fresh and warm in January as they are with us in June. They hovered over everything like the breast and wings of a dove, and from all the viewless gardens they summoned the smells of flowers. The gray, too, of the evening, into which the afternoons faded, instead of depressing the mind, as it sometimes does, into a mood of vapid dejection, carried with it its own subtle exhilaration. I often look back to a walk that I took along the ramparts with Colonel and Mrs. Falkland. We came about five o'clock to what is called the Kyrenia Gate. Outside was the Turkish cemetery—a bare enclosure surrounded by a broken wall. Far away over the great pastoral plain was a dying line of sunset between two mountain ranges, and a faint gleam rested on the leaning stones under which the nameless Turkish dead

were sleeping. Within was the darkening town, with its Gothic cathedral and its look of remote Damascus. There was an odd pathos in the scene —a gentle desolation touched with a certain wildness—which caused the thoughts to enter tents and deserts, and then sent them back to the music of Gray's Elegy. The moment was full of voices and of melancholy with no pain in it.

Such, then, were the scenes amongst which my life passed itself, varied by pleasant gatherings at familiar English meals, and hours of conversation in the evening. But familiar though the household life of my host and hostess was, its details were somehow transfigured by the sense of its strange surroundings. The English table-cloth and the silver of English salt-cellars had in my eyes a foreign glimmer when flecked by the Cyprian sunlight; foreign associations stole across the palate at the taste of unknown wines and fruits and cheese; and phantoms of the East and of the old Western crusaders hovered at night in the drawing-room amongst the shadows of the lofty rafters.

And once again I must say, what I have said before, that the novelty of the place—the im-

pression that it was a dream or an enchantment—grew stronger instead of weaker as I saw more and more of it. It was a dream still, but a dream that was every day more wonderful, for it was a dream that would not melt.

However, after a week of this delightful idleness, conscience forced me to take some further steps about the business which was by way of having brought me to the island. I sent Scotty to explore the mountains as I had resolved to do; and, after having been absent for some twelve hours, he returned with the news that the very place had been found—cave, cypress tree, ruined church and everything. I instantly decided on going there the next day but one, and when I happened to mention this to my charming acquaintance, Mr. Matthews, to my great pleasure he offered to come with me.

CHAPTER X

A GLIMPSE OF CYPRIAN HISTORY

MY experiences of a Cyprian mule had taught me one thing, and that was never to ride one when there was any other means of conveyance. It was accordingly arranged that we should drive as far as Kythrea and ascend the mountains on foot, accompanied, however, by a guide, and our two servants on mules, which would carry our luncheon, and I hoped carry back some marble.

I breakfasted at eight with Mr. Matthews in his old archbishop's palace. One entered the pile through a low-browed Gothic doorway, which admitted one to a vaulted hall, used originally as a stable; and from this one passed into a court, surrounded with dim arcades, and full, in the usual way, of palms, orange trees, and bananas. An old stone staircase rose through the air on arches, its balustrades brushed by the dark-green

leafage, and brought one in two turns to an immense open loggia, carpeted with matting and surrounded by plain divans. Across the garden one looked at a medley of neighbouring buildings, partly Oriental, partly crumbling Gothic, which shone in the blue sky with a promise of perfect weather. Out of this loggia, besides various bedrooms, opened three large apartments, whose decorations were of some interest. One of them —the largest—had at one end a curious niche, which might once have held a statue of a saint or the Blessed Virgin. The walls of all three were wainscotted, and adorned with some carved mirrors, and the ceilings were mosaics of coloured geometrical spaces, reminding one somewhat of a pattern in a kaleidoscope grown dirty. The house had been entirely altered, as well as halved in size, since the days of its episcopal masters, and the history of these decorations could not be arrived at accurately. The niche may have been mediæval, but the wainscotting and the ceilings were Turkish ; and certain pieces of plaster-work—flowers and bows and ribbons—evidently dated from the earlier part of the last century, when the taste of Paris

not only governed Europe, but actually penetrated to this remote corner of the East.

As we drove out of Nicosia the same feeling of freshness and primitive life saluted us which had made my expedition on the mule and the feather-bed so invigorating; but on quitting the carriage, where the road ended at Kythrea, we found our feet in every way preferable to the mule. The village, with its people, its watercourses, and its gardens, again made a series of shining idyllic pictures. The women had gay jackets and gayer petticoats, and in their hair tiaras of brilliant beads. The waists of the men were bound with gaudy sashes. The horses, sheep, and cattle stood, as formerly, knee-deep in the green grass under the olive trees.

Our ascent through the mountains had only two new features, neither of which was apparent till we were nearing our destination. One of them was the fact that, instead of being close to Pentedactylon, the place in question was at least three miles away from it. The other was that during the last half-hour of our walk the rude path which we followed was littered with

small fragments of the very stone I was in search of. On the red ground, and amongst the gray pebbles, they caught the eye with their greenness as if they were dusty leaves. Elated by this, we welcomed in good spirits another mass of greenness which soon made itself visible. This was the solitary cypress tree of which we had heard so much. It stood there, just as it had been described to me, large as a churchyard yew; and the other details of the scene equally answered my expectations. We ate our luncheon in front of the cave and the fountain; the orange-coloured precipice rose like a wall opposite to us, and above us the ruined church showed its splinters of desolate masonry.

Our luncheon over, we instantly set to work with our geologists' hammers, and began to look again for the green marble masses. Our search was, however, fruitless. Stone masses of some sort were on all sides of us in profusion; every slope was littered with them. But one and all they had surfaces of silvery whiteness; and our hammers showed us that they were nothing but gray limestone. There were green fragments every-

where, but none beyond the size of a pebble; and we were obliged to content ourselves with making a collection of these, when time warned us that we ought to be turning homewards. We had, however, hardly proceeded a couple of hundred yards when something caught my eye which made me stop short suddenly. On an open plot amongst some myrtle bushes, that was dotted with a few gray boulders, I saw amongst these a large sombre something, which a second glance showed me was a mass of dark-green stone. We both of us hastened up to it. It was the very thing we were in search of, except that in size it fell far short of my expectations. It was perhaps as large as a small pig, and was not wholly unlike a pig in shape. I broke off what rudely corresponded to the nose; and having hastily looked in vain for anything else like it, I handed the specimen to Scotty, and we resumed our way, promising ourselves to return and continue our explorations in a day or two.

The journey home was interesting in several unexpected ways. We went down the mountains so quickly that we were again traversing Kythrea before the gold was gone from the afternoon sun-

light. Presently, as we neared a poor isolated cottage, the prevailing quiet was broken by a singular wild moaning. "Listen!" said my companion, pausing. "Those people have lost some one. That is the dirge which they always sing for the dead." We passed the cottage; and, squatting against its farther wall, we saw two women with dark dishevelled hair and painfully strained faces, the one silent, but beating her breast rhythmically, and the other pouring forth a prolonged piteous wail, of which the words and cadences seemed constantly to repeat themselves. "Soon," said Mr. Matthews, "that one will be silent; she will beat her breast, and the other one will take up the singing. The custom," he went on, "is of extreme antiquity, and there is no doubt that it comes from Phœnicia. It was expressly condemned by a pope in the Middle Ages as 'that heathenish Syrian custom of immoderately wailing for the dead.'"

Mr. Matthews was full of information like this; and for the rest of the way back he poured it forth into my ear. He was the only person I met during the whole of my stay in Cyprus who had studied systematically its mediæval history, who

showed any interest in its castles and feudal life, or turned to its past with a sense of romance or sentiment. I had been debating for some days as to what places in the island would best repay a visit, my time being unhappily limited; and on this point Mr. Matthews was the very adviser I needed. I found, in fact, after a single hour's consultation with him, that my programme for the future was taking a definite shape and including the very things in it which I should probably value most.

In addition to his instructions about buildings and architecture he helped me to understand the existing scenery of the island. The whole of the mountains, he said, with perhaps a few exceptions, were at one time covered with forests. These have, however, been constantly felled for timber, from the days of Alexander the Great to the days of the Turkish sultans; and thus by a slow but ceaseless process, in the course of two thousand years, two-thirds of them have disappeared. It is the slopes of the Pentedactylon range, looking towards Nicosia, that have suffered most in this way. The consequence has been that the soil,

in which once the trees were rooted, has been, to a great extent, washed into the plains below, and has in some places, within historical times, raised their level by at least thirty feet. In proof of this he told me that at a village, whose name escaped me, there is a singular church, which stands in a walled enclosure. The walls of this, as seen from the outside, rise hardly more than a few feet from the ground; but one finds, on looking over them, that they sink to a depth so great that the church within stands in a sunk basin, leaving nothing visible from the neighbouring fields but its roof.

The depth of soil, indeed, over a large part of the island is astonishing. It is still abundant even amongst the lofty crags of the mountains, and the forests would again rise as luxuriant and green as formerly if it were not for the peasants, who cut every stick for fire-wood, and the ubiquitous goats, who allow few sticks to grow. Certain tracts, however, which belong to the State, have been placed by the British Government under the protection of foresters, who with some success keep the goats and peasants away, and already within their limits

the slopes that were naked yesterday are fledged with pigmy pines that promise to make forests to-morrow. There seems little doubt that if this change completes itself the rainfall will be increased and the climate modified, with results that can be foreseen by anybody. As it is, wherever water is plentiful the ground is a mass of greenness, as we saw it to be at Kythrea. There is hardly a spring whose presence is not signalised by an ilex or a sycamore towering like a sentinel over its source, and whose banks are not fringed by olives, gardens, and fruit trees. Cyprus, in fact, is really a sleeping Eden, needing only the gift of seasonable rains to awaken it.

From subjects like these my companion wandered into history, and he told me a number of quaint and humorous anecdotes, which he himself, or writers like De Mas Latrie, had unearthed from the dim chronicles of the Cyprian Middle Age. Some of them, with their naïve detail and vividness, lit up parts of the past on which few eyes ever linger, like a match struck suddenly in the passages of a forgotten crypt. Most people know, for instance, in a dull, colourless way, that Richard Cœur de Lion

made a transitory conquest of Cyprus, and that this led somehow to its possession by the Lusignans afterwards; but few people know the particulars of this dramatic transaction—fresh to-day as they ever were—which I must indulge myself by telling the reader as I had them told to me.

As every schoolboy knows, and indeed as all men and women know who are fresh, as very few of them are, from reading a schoolboy's books, in the year 1191 Richard Cœur de Lion was on his way, by sea, to the Holy Land. He had with him a considerable number of ships, and on one of them was his betrothed, Berengaria, whom it was arranged that he should marry at Jerusalem. Some way south of the island of Rhodes he encountered a violent storm, which scattered his fleet to the four quarters of heaven. Certain of the ships were wrecked on the coast of Cyprus, not far from Limasol; and another, freighted with the precious burden of Berengaria, at last found itself rocking on the swell in Limasol roads. The sailors of the former, though the shore on which they had been cast was Christian, instead of receiving any help from the natives, were attacked and robbed by them; they only reached

Limasol with difficulty, and on their arrival they were seized and detained as prisoners. As for Berengaria, she fared very little better. She was, it would seem, extremely sea-sick, only, instead of being, like the others, ill-treated on landing, she was told insultingly that she must not land at all.

The explanation of these barbarities was as follows. Cyprus was at that time under the rule of a certain Isaac Comnenus, who had lately tried in Armenia to make an independent king of himself, and, failing, had fled to Cyprus. Here he was more successful. He arrived armed with some forged imperial letters, on the strength of which he was accepted as duke or governor. He at once set himself to wring, by taxes or otherwise, whatever treasure he could from his new subjects. By means of this he surrounded himself with a powerful band of mercenaries; and he presently felt himself strong enough to proclaim himself emperor of Cyprus, openly defying his imperial sovereign at Constantinople. He had already quarrelled with the crusaders in Asia Minor, and was jealous of the ease with which, in Cyprus, they had hitherto obtained provisions. He began, therefore, by sub-

jecting them to all sorts of extortionate duties, and at length ventured to say bluntly that he would not for the future allow them even to land. As to the shipwrecked sailors, for whose landing the storm was responsible, he would do nothing for them beyond keeping them still in prison; but as to the Princess Berengaria, on reflection he changed his mind.

It suddenly occurred to him that it would be a magnificent stroke of state-craft to entice her on shore, secure her, and get for her some great ransom. Accordingly on the day following his first insulting message, he sent her another which was accompanied by presents and provisions, explaining away his discourtesy and begging that she would honour him by landing. There were, however, some experienced sailors on board who knew something of the person with whom they had to deal; and by their advice the presents and invitation were declined, and nothing was asked for but a supply of fresh water. Isaac Comnenus, furious at his scheme failing, replied brutally that they should have no water from him, and for fear they should take it he choked

up the brook at Limasol with blocks of marble and columns, taken from ruined temples.

The last block, however, had hardly been put in its place when a number of sails rose in sight on the horizon. These proved to be the rest of the English fleet, with King Richard himself commanding it. He was making for Cyprus as a natural place of refuge, not knowing that the others were there before him and little dreaming of the sort of welcome they had experienced. The moment the news was told him, in a violent fit of passion he forced a landing with a body of his soldiers at Limasol, on which Isaac Comnenus in terror fled to the mountains. Where to find him and how to communicate with him was a difficulty, but Richard at last discovered two monks, through whom he sent him a message threatening war and naming his conditions of peace. Isaac sent, in reply to this, to say that he would presently meet King Richard at Limasol and discuss the matter with him in person. He was as good as his word. He arrived in royal pomp, with every preparation for receiving a brother monarch royally. When the meeting took place he set Richard at his side on

a throne covered with silk, and standing before them was the interpreter. The first to speak was Richard, who addressed Isaac thus :—

"I am astonished, my lord Emperor, that a Christian prince like you, that a witness like you of the sufferings of that Sacred Land in which our Lord Christ was crucified, have made no effort to deliver it from the yoke of the infidels. You will not only not aid those who are now besieging Acre, but will not even give provisions to those who are coming to aid them from so far. In the name of God, in the name of our Holy Faith, I demand that you put an end to all the complaints that are made against you. I demand that you join us yourself, as you ought to do, with your own army, and that for the future you allow the crusaders freely to buy in Cyprus whatever may be requisite for their enterprise."

To this Isaac replied with a grave and regretful courtesy, "My lord King, I am well aware of the honour with which I should cover myself if only I could do as you advise me. But for me it is impossible, seeing I know this : that if once I left my island I should never again return to it. Never-

theless I desire to aid you, so far as my means suffer me; and till Acre is taken I promise to do for you this much: I will send and will maintain for you a company of two hundred soldiers; and any and every crusader who comes to Cyprus for provisions shall be allowed to buy them freely, and shall pay no duty upon them."

Richard, accustomed to the rougher manners of Europe, was not only pacified but charmed by Isaac's Oriental courtesy; and he retired, after many civilities, delighted with the results of the interview. Nor was Isaac himself any the less satisfied, though, as will appear presently, for somewhat different reasons. His only object in meeting Richard at all had not been to make him a friend, but to gauge his character as an enemy; and the conclusion he had come to with regard to that point was this: he considered Richard as a man absorbed by a single passion—a desire to reach his destination and begin his conflict with the infidel—and for this reason unlikely, come what might, to waste his time by remaining in Cyprus to assert himself. Accordingly the two monarchs had hardly retired to rest when Isaac quietly rose, and not

pausing to dress himself, mounted a horse and galloped off to Colossi. From this place, which is not two hours from Limasol, he had the hardihood to send a message to Richard, telling him and his followers to be quit of the island instantly, "or else," he said, "I will very soon let you know how little I think of you and all your barbarous Franks."

The result of this message was singularly unexpected. Instead of pocketing the insult and hurrying on to Palestine, Richard at once disembarked his entire military force; and the clank of Western armour and the tramping of Western horses were soon spreading terror in the startled streets of Limasol. Isaac, as best he could, got his forces together; but Richard, falling on them, put them to instant rout, seized an immense treasure, and returned to Limasol in triumph. Here he was presently joined by Guy de Lusignan, who in the most romantic manner imaginable had risen to be King of Jerusalem; and here Richard was married in solemn state to Berengaria. Isaac meanwhile had fled into the recesses of the mountains; and thither Richard, as soon as his wedding was over, accompanied by Guy, lost no time in

pursuing him. They at last drove him into the open country, and joined battle with him outside the town of Tremitus, which lay in the central plain, some ten miles north of Larnaca. Here Richard was again completely victorious; he took Isaac prisoner, and he found himself master of the island. As for Tremitus, he made it a heap of ruins. Near its site there are still some broken Phœnician walls; and long afterwards the story lingered amongst the islanders that these were the remains of a town that had been destroyed by an English king.

As a pendant to this story I must add that of Guy de Lusignan. Some ten years before the events just related Baldwin IV., King of Jerusalem, was dying. His eldest child, who was destined to succeed him on the throne, was a widowed daughter named Sibylle, who had married the Baron de Montferrat; and at this juncture all her near relations begged her for all their sakes to marry a second time, and to marry some one who would bring strength to the family. Sibylle, however, if not extremely wise, was what excellent people in these days are accustomed to call unworldly. There happened at that time to be a young French-

man in Jerusalem—a penniless member of a noble but unimportant family—who had little to recommend him but his face and his pleasant manners. To Sibylle, however, these had for some time recommended him, not only well but, if gossip said true, too well. When, therefore, she was thus importuned to marry, instead of turning her attention to the great barons of the realm, she horrified her friends by selecting this valueless, detrimental Guy, who was merely a second cousin of a Sire de Lusignan, in Poitou. With much wifely tact she at once made him independent, giving him the countship of Jaffa and Ascalon; and before long, with his wife, he ascended the throne of Jerusalem. How, after his wife's death, his position grew precarious, and after various vicissitudes Richard sold him the island of Cyprus for a sum about equal to £200,000, need not be told here; and I will end his story with one delightful touch, which shows that men, even in those far times, were our kindred. His brothers at home, when they heard of his splendid fortunes, instead of rejoicing in them, in that unnatural manner which our friends the scientific altruists and Mr. Herbert Spencer would

suppose, were consumed with the far more homely and human feeling of mortification; and one of them, Geoffrey, exclaimed, in words which one feels must be authentic, "If my brother Guy has become a king, he is perfectly certain to end by becoming God."

Whilst I was listening to stories of this kind, which made me forget the rough though rapid movement of the carriage, dusk had insensibly descended on the wide Cyprian plains, and the figures of our attendants on mules were like ghosts upon either side of us. Suddenly I saw the moonlight fall upon masonry, and we were entering Nicosia through the gloom of the Famagusta Gate.

CHAPTER XI

THE ETERNAL COMEDY

THAT evening I was somewhat late for dinner. Scotty having been absent with me, nothing was prepared for my dressing, and when I came to look for a white tie I was unable to find one anywhere. At last, after a desperate turning over of everything, I came on a collection of them in the strangest place in the world—in the corner of a cupboard, beneath my photographic camera; and near them was another surprise, a number of my silk socks carefully sandwiched between some boxes of photographic plates. When I explained to Mrs. Falkland this mysterious incident, both she and her daughter at once broke into a laugh, exclaiming together, "That must have been Metaphora!"

"And who is Metaphora?" I asked.

"Ah," they said, "she is a specimen of a native

Cyprioţe. She is one of our servants. You are quite sure to have seen her."

Then I too joined in the laugh; for Metaphora, as I now divined, was none other than the curious bouncing creature whose grin and whose movements had already caught my attention. There are some people who are born to excite a smile. I at once seemed to recognise, by a flash of instantaneous insight, that Metaphora was a member of this class; and the accounts I was presently given of her showed me I was not mistaken. Her manners, her English, and her impulses were all equally entertaining. I was gratified to find that, quite unconsciously, I had already aroused in her the liveliest interest in myself, that she had described me to Mrs. Falkland as being a "very pretty gentleman," that she had actually added, "He all the same as Vahly Pasha"—Vahly Pasha being the Governor, the most magnificent human being she knew—and that that evening she had given special attention to my room, "because the poor gentleman would be tired, having been all day on the roses." In Metaphora's language "the roses," I found, meant "roads."

I asked why her idea of making me more comfortable should have shown itself in hiding whatever I was most likely to want. "Ah," said Mrs. Falkland, "she is really almost half-witted. If I tell her to look for a thing she will often start off before she has heard what it is, and then she will come back to me saying, 'I not find it.' I say to her, 'How can you if you will not stay to hear what it is!' and then she answers, not so much to me as to herself, 'Fool Metaphora. She very fool girl. Poor nowti [naughty] Metaphora!'"

The following day I discovered the truth of this description for myself. Looking for some of my letters, which had been placed under a weight on my dressing-table, I found that they all were missing. At last, protruding from a packing-case, which, with an open end against the wall, was supporting a military chest, I espied the tips of a piece of foolscap paper and of a torn copy of an old *Evening Standard*. A near examination showed me that all my letters, my envelopes, and the waste paper used for my packing had been rolled up together into a tight ball and stuffed into this hiding-place. I asked Metaphora

that evening what had induced her to do this. "Ah," she exclaimed with a long meditative breath; then her eyes shone as if she had solved a problem. "Nowti Metaphora!" she exclaimed. "Me nowti—me very fool girl!" And then putting her head down and giving a sort of caper like a colt, she bounded out of the room and rustled down the stairs like an avalanche.

The servants, Mrs. Falkland told me, were as much amused at her as anybody. One of her peculiarities was a horror of beef, or, as she called it, "bullock meat." It was a favourite practical joke with the Scotch cook, Fraser, to give her a plate of beef with some chicken bones stuck amongst the slices, when, thinking the meat chicken, she would swallow it all with gusto, exclaiming, "Good! oh, good! Metaphora, she like that."

Poor Metaphora! Though her mistress thought her half-witted she still was blest with illusions which for her made life beautiful. Her waist was like that of a barrel; her smiling mouth went literally from ear to ear; yet she was firmly persuaded that one of Colonel Falkland's secretaries—a good-looking

young Englishman who was quite unconscious of her existence—had fallen in love with her one day when she opened the door for him. She was also persuaded that whilst *he* was in love with *her*, Fraser, the cook of fifty, was equally in love with *him*; and whenever Fraser thwarted any one of her wishes she set it down to the angry jealousy of a rival—or, as she herself expressed it, "Fraser, she jelly me."

She had also her aspirations, which are even better things than illusions, her "devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow." The longing of her life was for a tight-fitting velvet dress like one made for the Princess of Wales as she had seen it in the pages of a fashion-book.

I have lingered over Metaphora not for her own sake only, but because from my introduction to her manifold excellences I date my insight into the comedy of Cyprian life. Colonel Falkland, whose sense of humour was keen, by what seemed to me an exceedingly natural transition, went on from Metaphora to something even more naïve and ridiculous; and that is the something which passes for the political life of the island. I had arrived, I believe from a study of *Whitaker's Al-*

manac, at what Cardinal Newman would call a "notional assent" to the fact that Cyprus possessed an elected legislative council; but I never vividly realised before that evening that this council, to me hitherto merely the shadow of a name, implied all the horrors of a modern popular franchise. At first this discovery terribly shocked and disappointed me. I felt as if suddenly I had fallen out of the clouds to the ground. Good heavens! I thought, and are all these enchanted creatures —these wild shepherds, these mysterious turbaned merchants, who move through an air that seems charged at once with wonder and simplicity—are they really nothing but modern voters in disguise, with beliefs in the people, in the vices of the governing classes, in the popular conscience, and in the mandates of the constituencies? But, as I listened to my host a little longer, I found that my fears were needless. The blight of a constitution which was only inflicted on the islanders—I believe I speak correctly—as a sop to our English Radicals, has fallen on most of them like snow on a summer sea. With the exception of a small minority, drawn principally from the Greek shopkeepers, the glorious

privilege of taking part in their own government touches them only as an occasional vague annoyance, which the moment it is over fades away from their consciousness. When the elections take place for the Legislative Council the difficulty is to persuade them to vote at all. The peasants indeed, even during the heat of a contest, are rarely aware of the names of either of the rival candidates. They have been constantly known to ask the returning officer to take their papers and do just what he liked with them. It frequently happens also that the head man of a village is begged by his fellow villagers to go and vote instead of them, and let one piece of meaningless trouble do duty for them all.

No doubt it may be said that though this is true of the majority there is still a minority which understands its political privileges and uses them. There certainly is, and it uses them too with a vengeance, but it uses them in a way so delightfully simple and childish that, instead of infecting the air with the prose of modern Europe, as a corporate body it merely seems to the imagination to be playing the part of Bottom in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. This minority is composed of perhaps a

couple of hundred people, all of them professional Radicals, and the greater part of them Greeks. In almost every respect they are ludicrously faithful imitations of their engaging brethren in the West; only the imitation has this great advantage over the original, that it can hardly be called mischievous and is infinitely more amusing. The professional Cyprian patriot in the effect he produces on the mind is very much like a monkey and a parrot imitating Mr. William O'Brien, the parrot supplying the voice and the monkey supplying the gestures. Almost every device distinctive of the Western agitator is employed by the Cyprian also, from flattery of the people to abuse of the existing order; and his political arguments and exhortations have the same wide range, beginning with lowly exaggeration, then rising to misrepresentation, and finally soaring into the thunders of absolute fiction.

The *Daily News*, or even the *Pall Mall Gazette* itself, might have envied the success with which, shortly before my arrival, the patriots had collected a few hundred women and children, had sent them with a petition from Nicosia to Government House —a pleasant stroll of little more than a mile—and

contrived to get the event described in the English journals as a magnificent demonstration composed of ten thousand persons.

I am going here to indulge in a half-minute's digression. To the sober reason few things can seem sillier than the proposal of professional religion-makers to worship idealised humanity; and yet occasionally one can almost detect a meaning in it. For in humanity as a whole there is under the changing surface a persistence, an august immutability, which at odd moments is brought home to us, and is like nothing else in the world. What, for instance, can be more striking than this characteristic, the same always and everywhere: that the men who take the trouble to say they despise rank are men who inwardly grovel and cringe before it, and would wear it themselves, if they could, with the most arrogant vanity? Of this Cypriote patriotism afforded me a very pleasant illustration, and that is the reason why I have thus paused to moralise. During the first years of the British occupation one of the persons whom the Government found most troublesome, was a certain individual who

rejoiced in the name of Palæologus. He was consumed with a passion for the people and for popular freedom. Every *demos*, he held, should manage its own affairs, nor submit its majestic self to any oppression but its own. The Turks, according to him, were indeed vile usurpers, but the English were viler still. Cyprus was a Greek island; it ought to belong to Greece. As for himself, he declared with the eloquence of a Demosthenes he had in his own veins the blood of the Greek emperors, and he appealed to his compatriots to side with him as their natural leader; and under his name as a banner to protest against the oppressions of England. As often happens to agitators, his agitation landed him in a libel, making him amenable to the law, which the oppressors now administered. No sooner had this happened than he triumphantly established the fact that he was not a Cypriote subject, that he was not even a Greek, but that his domicile was at Smyrna, and that his father was a Turkish tailor at Constantinople.

This story suggested to me a very natural question. I asked what the oppressions were of which the English were alleged to be guilty. What

a Radical calls oppression is generally some necessary act misrepresented, but still there must generally be something to misrepresent. The most definite something in this case was, so I learned, taxation. It is the only political question which the people at large appreciate, and a reduction of taxes is the cry that most quickly appeals to them. That this should be so is certainly not surprising. They are most of them very poor, and they feel the slightest burden. It would, however, by no means suit the Radicals to make the existing taxes their only or even their principal grievance, for if these taxes were reduced the business of the Radicals would be gone. They are obliged, therefore, to supplement this one definite grievance with a number of others which are at once indefinite and imaginary, which being indefinite cannot be disproved, and which, as they do not exist, cannot be taken away.

Their success in this line is remarkable. I found, from what I was told, that they almost equalled the Irish leaders in what may be called the patriot's vision—that peculiar faculty by which benefits are seen under the aspect of in-

juries—and also in that faculty, peculiar to the professional patriot also, of frenzied indignation at events that have never happened at all. Thus I asked what the Radicals said about this fact: that the English had conferred on them one blessing at all events, by extirpating the locusts which once ravaged the island.

"Yes," I was answered, "that is a blessing undoubtedly, but the Cyprian patriots have been quite equal to dealing with it. True," they say, "the English have done this. Of course they have; but they ought to have done it sooner. Instead of thanking them for what they have done we have every cause to complain of them for taking so long in doing it; and, after all, who has paid for it? We have! Greece would have done the same thing, but have done it years ago; and Greece would have borne half, if not all, the expense of it."

This is good. Could a Mr. O'Brien, a Mr. Dillon, or a Mr. Davitt have done better? It is, however, outdone by the following burning sentence, with which one of the Cyprian patriots strove to arouse his countrymen: "Under the Turks," he said, "you were merely poor people. Under the English

you are helots!" All the logic of modern agitation breathes in those few syllables, which would have absolutely no connection with facts whatever if they did not happen to contain a vague inversion of them.

Let me, however, do the patriots justice. If they are not very honest in the matter of means, they are perfectly sincere so far as regards their ends. They do, no doubt, desire the substitution of Greek rule for English, for the definite and intelligible, if not well-founded, reason that they see in it an unlimited prospect of Government places for themselves. It would be cynical also, and perhaps even disingenuous, with the knowledge which I happen to possess, to deny that in some cases their political animosity towards ourselves may be due to feelings of a warmer and less calculating kind. In one case at least this was so. One patriot's wrath—I tell this for the honour of patriotism—was almost epic and heroic in its origin. The hero was a man renowned for his probity, especially for the severity of what would be called his moral character; and entering one night a certain house in Nicosia, the fame of which was hardly equal to his own, he was

met at the door by a British soldier emerging, who, brimming over with zeal for the honour of England, hit him in the eye out of a sense of pure superiority, exclaiming as he did so, "You b——y Greek, take that!" The Greek's character was far too spotless to enable him to explain his grievance against the soldier, so he avenged his outraged dignity by opposing the British Government.

So much moral modesty will be thought doubly remarkable when the surrounding state of society and of opinion is considered. Though the temples of Aphrodite are overthrown and her altars flameless, though shy professors grub in the dust of her scandalous courts and her very name is appropriate to alien Christian uses, the influence of the goddess is still immortal in the air, and the Bishop of ——, when I was in the island, was about, with a curious appropriateness, to figure as the co-respondent in a divorce case. That, no doubt, was a scandal, but a mild scandal only. Another prelate, not very long ago, was said to have a child in every village of his diocese. Another was thought a model of decorum and discipline because he asked leave, instead of taking it, to keep a couple of mistresses; and the

present Archbishop of Nicosia, who is really a respectable man, is regarded as an absolute saint because no such romances are connected with him.

The behaviour of the Turks is in many ways superior to that of the Greeks; but with regard to the point to which we are now alluding I am not quite sure that their superiority is very decided. The following story makes me feel doubtful. During the early years of the British occupation it fell, Colonel Falkland told me, to the lot of a friend of his to superintend the collection of taxes in certain parts of the island. One day the person in question had been up betimes in the morning, and having visited already two Turkish villages, arrived about noon at a third. Here he was given breakfast at the house of the principal inhabitant, and while the meal was in progress an official report was brought to him of the taxes that still were owing there. Half the people, it seemed, had that year paid nothing. He asked why. He was told that the people were poor. "Who," he asked, "are the richest?" The names of the richest were read to him. "Have these men paid?" he asked. The answer was, "No, not one of them." "Well," he said to his

subordinate, "we will begin with them. Make them pay first, and we will see what we will do afterwards." His host, who was foremost amongst those thus alluded to, heard this unwelcome order, but it did not diminish his courtesy. On the contrary, knowing that his guest would by this time be tired, he closed the shutters of the room for him and begged him to refresh himself with a siesta. The guest gladly stretched himself out on a low divan, and before long sleep was stealing over him. Suddenly a slight noise startled him. He opened his eyes, and soon, in spite of the darkness, he became conscious that some human figure was present. He saw at last that it was a female. He concluded that she was there by mistake, and he gave a slight cough as a hint that the room was occupied. Instead of retiring, however, the apparition glided towards him, stood at the side of the divan, and in silence bent slightly over him. He raised himself on his elbow. As he did so the figure let fall her yashmak and disclosed to his gaze a beautiful Turkish girl, who in another moment he saw was his host's daughter. He stared at her, speechless with astonishment. In answer she fixed her eyes on him,

and he read a meaning in them—no matter what it was—which no well-conducted father, whether Christian or Turk, would approve of. For a second or two he was almost stupefied; then, as if by inspiration, a sense of the truth came to him. He suddenly sprang up, he threw the doors open, and there outside were all the chief Turks of the village, waiting for a sign from the girl that the collector of taxes had committed himself. Had the plot succeeded, as Colonel Falkland observed, needless to say that the taxes of those Turks would have been light.

This kind of discourse carried us far into the evening, and a few days later the thread of it, which was now broken by bed-time, was taken up, not by Colonel Falkland, but by Mr. Matthews, who, true to his word, went again with me to look for the marble. As to the marble, the result of our researches was disappointing, and I came to the conclusion that it was worth no further trouble; but on the way back such a trifle as the collapse of my whole practical expectations was quite put out of my mind by the series of stories that were told me. I can only repeat—indeed I can only recollect—a few, for even the best of stories often

fade from the memory almost as quickly as happiness fades from life. It is true that in the *motif* of them there was a certain amount of sameness ; but so there is in most of Boccaccio's tales and in every French novel that reaches a tenth edition. In fact what a breach of the seventh commandment is to these, some attempt at evading the taxes was to the others.

Mr. Matthews, being connected with the assessment of taxes himself, was naturally on familiar ground. Two of his principal heroes were prelates. At the beginning of the British occupation the Archbishop of Nicosia came to the authorities and inquired with perfect gravity if it really were possible that he would be expected to pay his taxes. The answer, of course, was " Yes." " Very well," said the Archbishop, in a tone of obstinate meekness, " then you expect something of me that I am quite unable to do." Asked what he meant, he replied, " I mean simply this : that my lands are assessed at four times their actual value." " Indeed," said the authorities. " If that is the case we will have your lands revalued. But we have gone by the assessment left us by the late Government, to which

it appears you have never taken exception. Can you kindly explain this to us?" "Heh?" said the Archbishop; "but that is explained easily." The Turks, it appears, had assessed him at this really exorbitant figure, with his own consent, but on this distinct understanding: he was never to pay a penny. Then, when any of the Greek peasantry grumbled, the officials would be able to say, "Look at your good Archbishop: what are your burdens to his? And yet he never makes a murmur."

If the Government, however, has trouble in getting the taxes out of the bishops, the bishops in their turn have trouble in getting their own dues out of their flocks. "Ah," said one of them one day to Mr. Matthews, "dreadful, dreadful people in the village of Alitsópalo! They will pay me nothing! As soon as ever my collector goes to them all the Christians at once pretend to be Turks. The first cottage he enters, the owner, when asked his name, declares that he is Mohammed and his wife over there is Fatima; whilst the collector knows, though at the moment he may not be able to prove it, that this one is really George and the other is really Anna. Ah!" said the bishop, "dreadful, dreadful people!"

But this piece of ingenuity is crude and simple when compared with others which at times are resorted to for a similar purpose. In one town Mr. Matthews found that the amount of unpaid taxes was exceptionally and inexplicably large; and of these arrears he was told that the larger part was irrecoverable, and that he need not therefore trouble his head about them. The mystery was inquired into, and the names of the defaulters were produced. Then came to light this singular fact: all these men were aliens, and therefore were exempt from taxation. How, then, did it happen that they had been assessed at all? The answer was this: a certain gross sum was due from the town to the Government, and the townspeople, having engaged to pay this, were allowed to distribute the burden amongst themselves as they pleased. The lion's share had accordingly been at once laid on the aliens, who readily fell in with a plan from which they could not possibly suffer; and in this pleasant way the liabilities of the natives had been halved.

Another town distinguished itself as follows. The inhabitants were desired by the Government to send in their own valuation of the house property that

was to be taxed. A statement was accordingly presented duly to the commissioner. He looked at the total with astonishment. It was only £3000. He desired that the assessors should be sent for; and when they came he asked them if they were satisfied that their valuation was really correct. They said, "We certainly are. If it errs at all it errs by being a little too high." "Well," said the commissioner, "the matter is of some importance. May I ask if you are prepared to sign a paper to this effect?" The assessors drew themselves up with an air of virtuous hauteur. "Sir," they replied, "on serious occasions like the present, when we deliberately say a thing, we are naturally ready to sign it." "Then in that case," said the commissioner quietly, again casting his eye over the list of figures before him, "I shall, under powers given me by the Government, take over from you, for the purpose of public improvements, a hundred of these houses; and I will do so at your own valuation, which you cannot complain of, as you have just told me that it is high rather than otherwise. Here is the paper, gentlemen. Have the goodness to sign it." The assessors started. For a moment they were utterly silent. Then came

a shuffling of feet, an interlude of hemming and hawing, and then stuttered excuses. "Well," said the commissioner blandly, "if you are not quite sure about the matter take a day to think it over. Come back to-morrow, and then you shall tell me the sum that will really satisfy you." The assessment by next day had risen from £3000 to £7000.

Some readers, perhaps, may think these anecdotes trivial. My own view is that they throw a great deal more light on that least trivial of subjects, the corporate character of the people, than volumes of scientific speculation on the future of man and of democracy. At all events here is one anecdote more, and it certainly can be called trivial by nobody. It is, indeed, hardly an anecdote; it is rather a piece of important constitutional history, which shows how democracy in Cyprus was within an inch of destruction, and how it saved itself.

The policy of the Cyprian patriots has been, from the beginning of the chapter, at once consistent and simple. It has been to oppose every scheme or suggestion, no matter what, that originated with the British authorities. The authorities for a long time had borne this treatment with patience, when

a measure was laid by them before the Council which was not only so obviously but also so urgently necessary that no rational man could have two opinions about it. When, therefore, the patriots, utterly undaunted, proceeded to oppose it, just as they had opposed the others, the Governor's patience fairly gave way at last, and he told them plainly that if this sort of thing continued he should be obliged to appeal to her Majesty to reconsider the constitution. The patriots were staggered; they could hardly believe their ears. They were like dreaming somnambulists, marching to imaginary conquests, who had been suddenly wakened by coming into collision with a wall. To reconsider the constitution they knew could mean only to abolish it. They saw, therefore, that in this case there was nothing for them to do but to drop their opposition with as good a grace as possible. But how was this to be done with any grace at all? That was the question. They could not make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of their chief supporters by voting for a measure which they had been calling abominable yesterday. They accordingly hit at last on the following plan. When the day

came on which the fate of the measure was to be decided, a number of those who opposed it were to keep away from the Council, just sufficient to allow of its being carried by a majority of one, the rest of the party declaiming against it as formerly. Everything was settled; but on the morning of the eventful day the patriots discovered that somehow they were still one too many. It was necessary, therefore, that one more of them should absent himself. Their choice fell on a gentleman whose name, if I recollect rightly, was Pierides, and he was told to suggest some pretext by which his absence might be accounted for. "Come," they said, "you can easily pretend that you are ill." "No, no," he said; "that will never satisfy my supporters. I live in Nicosia, and I am known to be in robust health." "I have it," said some one. "Urgent business summons you, and in half an hour's time you must be on your way to Larnaca." This suggestion met with universal approval, Mr. Pierides himself being as well satisfied with it as anybody. But presently recollecting himself, "Bah, my friends!" he exclaimed, "you have forgotten one thing: you have forgotten the expense of travel-

ling there and back. The double fare by the diligence will come to full five shillings. Do you expect me to pay that out of my own private pocket? Never. I go for the sake of my party, and my party must pay it for me." At this the other patriots looked extremely blank. "Very well," said Mr. Pierides calmly, "if you will not pay for me I remain, and my country must take the consequences." Awed by so much firmness, the others at last gave in. Mr. Pierides was given the sum required. He went for the day to Larnaca. In his absence the measure was carried; and he thus stands alone in the annals of the popular cause as a hero who engaged to save, and who did save, a democracy, for no other reward than the payment of his own expenses.

Stories take a colouring from the scenes amongst which one hears them. These I heard as, for a second time at twilight, we were driving home from the spurs of Pentedactylon and were speeding across the plain towards the walls and minarets of Nicosia. The last time I had done this I had been listening to the romance of the past. Now, with equal entertainment, I had been listening to the comedy of the present; and this, though many of its details were

modern and prosaic enough, and indeed called to mind the paragraphs of our own newspapers, was yet for the most part so naïve and so whimsical that under the influence of surrounding associations, it seemed to become insensibly part of the romance itself. If it suggested our newspapers it suggested them only as a certain bank of clouds, which came floating over the mountains, suggested to my eye a phalanx of Irish members. For a moment I thought I saw the features of Dr. Tanner, about to provoke the censure of some unseen Speaker in the firmament; but just as he seemed on the point of calling the stars "liars" the noiseless air transformed him into a dignified, silent Turk, whilst the body of his supporters, all prepared to cheer him, softly melted together into a single monstrous griffin. Then up from behind the mountains, closely following after them, came a giraffe and a camel, with necks as tall as steeples and heads like cotton-wool, dipped in the light of evening; and the whole aërial medley slowly floated and vanished into the darkening depths of the sky, at the edge of which the sunset was burning. And thus the politicians of contemporary Cyprus, instead of

breaking the charm or disturbing the associations of their ancient Oriental island, merely added to them a new element of unreality. Their antics and tricks seemed to me, as I heard of them, to harmonise completely with the dream-like evening that then surrounded me. I remember its aspect still. The dome of the sky above was a transparent Prussian blue; lower down in the east it was clear like alabaster. One by one the golden points of the stars began to show themselves suddenly, as if they were being lighted. In the west the sunset at first was a brilliant orange; then this darkened into a deep stain of crimson, and against it black from the plain rose clusters of far-off palm trees.

"And crimson-hued the stately
palm trees
Whisper in odorous heights of
even"

CHAPTER XII

THE ETERNAL TRAGEDY

I WAS sorry to disturb the placidity of my life at Nicosia by even a thought of leaving it; but, as there were other places which I was fully determined to visit, I had already settled with myself what these places should be. Three of them, so I found, lay not very far apart—the town and castle of Kyrenia, the mountain castle of St. Hilarion, and the mediæval monastery of Bella Pais, which report said was wonderful. Accordingly, in the course of the next few days, Colonel Falkland, to whom I explained my wishes, procured for me an invitation to stay with one of the district judges, Mr. St. John, who lived within easy distance of all the three places I have mentioned. Mr. St. John's official duties would be shortly calling him from home, so he begged that, if I came, I would come as soon as possible. I had not expected quite so much

hurry in the matter; but, as hurry was necessary, it was arranged by an exchange of telegrams that I should go to him as soon as I could get a carriage to take me.

Meanwhile, in the single day that intervened, I underwent an experience entirely new and unexpected. I came down to breakfast, idly thinking over the stories which I have been just confiding to the reader. Little did I know, whilst I was smiling at the comedy of the island, that I was going in an hour or two to be introduced to its tragedy.

There was an old building in Nicosia which had once been a caravanserai, and which, some one told me, the Turks had used as a prison. I had several times been struck by its picturesque appearance, by its external arcades, by its deep and shadowy gate, and by its gray mouldering walls. Mrs. Falkland this morning greeted me with the pleasant intelligence that a certain Captain O'Flanagan, who occupied some post of authority, had promised to come at eleven o'clock to fetch us and show us over it, as it still was Government property. The Captain arrived duly—a tall, handsome Irishman, buoyant and almost bounding with the proverbial

spirits of his nation. I was somehow disappointed to learn from this sprightly gentleman that the building was a prison still, and that a body of police were quartered in it. The rascality of the natives, so far as I had heard of them, was, it is true, almost as idyllic as innocence ; so I had no fear of being introduced to an Oriental Newgate : but the sight of a sergeant and three or four subordinates, whom we found standing under the arch to receive us, quite dispelled my prospect of rambling over the precincts as I pleased. There was a good deal of military saluting, and then an unlocking of gates, and we passed into an open court, even more picturesque than I had anticipated. It was surrounded by two stories of cloisters, with the usual pointed arches, and in the middle was a miniature mosque with a cupola. The upper cloisters were reached by several graceful staircases ; against the wall of the mosque was a fountain, gray with age ; and quaint stone shoots for discharging the rain water protruded all round from the top of the walls like cannon. The ground-floor on one side was occupied by vaulted stables opening into the external arcades, which had originally caught my attention.

The imagination peopled the place with antique Oriental travellers; but I had soon seen enough of it, and I thought we were all departing when I found that, besides the prison, we were going to be shown the prisoners. I had myself no wish whatever to see them, but the others were more curious; and Captain O'Flanagan, whose hilarity rose with the occasion, seemed as anxious to show them to us as if they were pet monkeys.

Accordingly a gate was unlocked at the foot of one of the staircases, and we mounted to the upper cloisters. I had expected to find a few poor creatures in corners, far apart from each other and looking more like hermits than prisoners. To my astonishment the cloisters, from end to end, were crowded. Rows and groups of human beings, with the warm sunlight falling on them, were standing or sitting, engaged in various occupations. Some were boot-making, some were rope-making, some were sewing soldiers' trousers. They were of all ages, from the age of gray hairs to boyhood; and the chief effect they produced on me, as I watched them quietly at their work, was wonder that such harmless-looking people should be in prison at all.

I lost no time in inquiring what were their offences. As to four men and two youths in succession, I received the same answer, "Sheep-stealing." That was just as it should be. It was a pastoral and picturesque offence; and I was glad to think that they were expiating here in the sunlight instead of in their cells, whose dark, grated apertures were gaping just behind them like the cages of wild animals.

We had advanced some way, and I had been standing still for a moment to watch a wistful-eyed boy—a little fellow of fourteen—who was working diligently with a sewing-machine, when, turning to continue our progress, I saw something move in the gloom of the cell close to me. I looked in through the bars; but in a second I withdrew my eyes, for they had encountered those of a miserable human being. I called to Captain O'Flanagan, who was in the middle of an Irish witticism, as, with another of our party, he was peering into the cell adjoining, and asked him of what the man I had just seen was guilty. He consulted a scrap of paper posted against the wall with the prisoner's name and offence on it, and placidly said, "Murder." We passed

on, and I now began to realise that half of these cells which I had thought empty, were tenanted; and we were constantly invited to pause before this one or that one, exactly as if we were being taken round a menagerie. Some of the forms within looked hardened and desperate enough, and there was a certain grim satisfaction in seeing that the iron had closed on them; but for the most part it seemed to me, as I glanced reluctantly into the shadow, that their aspect betokened a humble, lamentable resignation, as if some weight had fallen on them, they knew not how nor whence, and they could only bear it with the amazement of dumb animals. At these poor creatures I was unable to look steadily. One instinctively turned away from them with the reverence due to sorrow. And yet from time to time I could not help inquiring what this man or what that man had done to bring him here. I could hardly believe my ears when my questions, one after the other, with a sinister sameness, met with the answer, "Murder." Here and there was somebody who had only robbed with violence; in one cell was a forger, and in another was a veteran pirate; but murder seemed to preponderate over

every other crime. I expressed my surprise at this to the sergeant, an intelligent Englishman. He answered, shrugging his shoulders, "I saw you, sir, stop just now to look at a little boy. That's one of our specimens! He's here for murder too!" "That boy!" I exclaimed. "I suppose it was an accident that took place in a quarrel?" "Not a bit of it," said the sergeant. "He and a friend of his, of the same age as himself, had some grudge against another boy. They waited for days and days, till that boy was alone, and they strangled him with a couple of boot-laces, which they had knitted together for the purpose." As I listened to all this, whilst we slowly made our progress, all the air seemed to grow sickly round me, and to come to my nostrils tainted with blood and sorrow. The prisoners at work in the sunlight were most of them tolerable objects; but these black cells, with the guilty eyes within, which one felt, without looking at them, were gleaming at one out of the shadow—the sense that these were close to us became soon intolerably painful. I drew a long breath when I found myself once again in the street; and I was glad to learn, since it seemed we were to make a morning of it,

that the rest of our time was to be given up to the Konak.

As I passed again through its silent vaulted guard-rooms, as I again looked at the beauty of the crumbling window over them, and caught through a broken arch a breath of the hiding violets, I was conscious of an effect like that felt by the nerves when something cool is laid on a head that is physically aching. I mentioned to Captain O'Flanagan that I had seen the place before. "Ah!" he said, "but you couldn't have seen half of it." I at once found that this was true; for whilst he was in the act of speaking we were being introduced to a scene that was certainly quite new to me. It was a small irregular yard, surrounded by mean outhouses, much like the yard of a dirty farm-house in England. There was a pump in the middle of it; on the ground were some earthenware basins; here and there was a heap of kitchen refuse, and our noses were soon saluted by an odour of warm cooking. At the sound of our voices a door presently opened, and a woman emerged, whose proportions were those of a female Falstaff. With a rolling gait she advanced a few paces towards us, and then,

perceiving Captain O'Flanagan and the sergeant, she turned round and preceded us into a kind of kitchen. Through this we passed into a white-washed passage ; the female Falstaff opened a door at the end of it, and we found ourselves in a bare room, with windows high up in the walls, confronted by a party of fourteen or fifteen women. I asked some one near me what these women were doing here. "Don't you know?" was the answer. "They are some of the female prisoners."

The horrors of the day, then, were not ended yet. We had left one prison merely to enter another. I faced the situation, however, and examined the faces before me. A part were young, but the larger part seemed old—wrinkled, and dejected, and suggesting nothing but compassion—all but one; amongst them was one exception. This was the face of a hideous, blear-eyed crone, who was almost bent double, and, with hands pressed against her stomach, peered up at us, showing her red eyelids, with an expression of cringing wickedness. Never in my life had I seen a face at once so miserable and so evil. "And what," I asked, "has she done?" I anticipated the answer. It was the old

story, "Murder." But there was more to follow. This old woman, I learned, had caused the death, not of her victim only, but of two other men besides. She had hired three to assist her in her deliberate deed, and two of them had been hanged, whilst the sentence of the third had been commuted. The old woman's sentence had been commuted also—perhaps in consideration of her great age and feebleness—but if justice in this case demanded the extreme penalty the debt had been paid practically not once, but many times. At the beginning of her imprisonment the old woman had a fever; and in her delirious sleep she was continually waking up, clutching her wizened throat, and imagining that the rope was round it. Turning away from her, I saw amongst the medley of criminal faces a little creature looking at us with soft coal-black eyes. This was a baby that had been lately born in the prison. It lay in its mother's arms, surrounded by squalor, and by calamity; but already its small nails had been made pink with henna, and a rude care had darkened it under its eyes with kohol. Were all the seeds of the full-grown evil near it, sleeping, ready to sprout in this half-conscious seedling?

There was one experience more, and the nightmare of the morning was ended. From this prison of criminals we were taken to an adjoining building; and there, in a double row of sunless, silent cells, we were shown the lunatics. There were not many of them. One and all they were old. Each was alone, and if they had not moved occasionally they might almost have passed for parts of the dilapidated walls confining them. I could not learn anything about the past lives of any of them, but, judging from their battered aspect, all of them must have long been familiar with some form of misfortune. If this were the case, for one thing they were to be congratulated on their present condition; for madness had taught them what sanity could not teach them—to smile.

At luncheon Colonel Falkland questioned me as to what I had seen. I was glad to thrust away from me the oppressive feelings that had been caused by it, and get about one or two points a little practical information. I remarked on the apathy with which the prisoners, those even in the cells, seemed to bear their confinement. "Yes," said Colonel Falkland, "and some of them—though not all—

go to the gallows with as little apparent feeling. As for the mere confinement, so long as it is not solitary, I doubt if they mind that. They like doing nothing, and they are able to talk with their companions. Solitude, without tobacco, is the thing that they really dread. I suppose," he added, "that of the prisoners you saw to-day, not more than one or two, even if any, were solitary?" That was true; and I asked why, if such was their feeling, the worst of them were not given the only punishment they could appreciate. Colonel Falkland said that this was at present impracticable, for the simple reason that the prison did not admit of it. Packed as the prisoners were, even now there was hardly room for them, and the Government had not a penny with which to enlarge the building. "But why," I asked, "need they all be sent to Nicosia? Are there no old prisons in the other parts of the island? And does Cyprus, with its handful of 160,000 inhabitants, really contribute the whole throng I have been looking at?" "Without a doubt," said Colonel Falkland, "there are other prisons in Cyprus—a prison in every district; but each of these is just as crowded as this. You ask if

all the prisoners you have seen come from Cyprus. Every one of them comes from the single district of Nicosia."

Ever since that morning a veil had been drawn across the sun for me; and now, as I listened, the day grew darker still. One of my Cyprian dreams —of my happy dreams—had been broken: and it was a dream which till to-day I had always taken for a reality. I had imagined that, in spite of their petty, bizarre rascalities, these islanders knew little of the more monstrous horrors of life. I had taken pleasure in noticing the honest faces of the peasantry, and their frank smiles, when one exchanged greetings with them on the road. I had heard much of their readiness to offer hospitality or help to strangers, and of the firm but gentle pride with which they always refused any payment for it. I now learned that in this island of Cyprus there was more crime, in proportion to the number of its inhabitants, than in any other known country in the world.

I asked from what classes the criminals mostly came, in especial the murderers, and how the murders arose. From what I was told I derived a little comfort. In the towns the Turkish mur-

ders nearly always originate in some ordinary fit of sombre but sudden passion, and the Greek murders in some half-drunken brawl. A number of these last have taken place at weddings. Wine has flowed; quarrelling has risen out of laughter; knives have flashed, and in a second or two one knife has been red. In the country districts the cause has generally some connection with sheep-stealing, or disputes about boundaries and water rights, or matters equally simple. I saw, however, that this explained a part of the case only. Blood was shed in ways that left darker stains than these. One father whose son had been sent to prison for stealing considered that the lad had brought disgrace on his family, and deliberately murdered him on the day he was set free. I had already seen a boy and an old woman whose crimes had been as cold-blooded and premeditated as crimes could be; and now Colonel Falkland told me that at this moment at Kyrenia three men were under sentence of death for a murder of which the only motive was robbery, and which had been planned for days and had been resolved on for weeks beforehand.

And yet, even among these dark clouds, a touch

of whimsical simplicity stole like a faint thread of light, and relieved my mind by at last justifying a laugh. One of the three men whom I have just mentioned fled, after the murder, to the hut of a lonely shepherd, and begged to be kept there in hiding. The shepherd, who had only a slight acquaintance with him, asked why he wished to be hidden. On this the murderer, more like a child than a man, explained everything in the most naïve manner possible. The shepherd looked grave. He said that this was a serious matter, and that under the circumstances his protection would have to be paid for. The murderer replied that the booty had not yet been divided. "I have no money," he said; "but save me, and I will steal a sheep for you."

With this anecdote Colonel Falkland left me. He went to his office, and I sat in the garden alone, feeling as if the burden of life, which I thought I had left in England, had again laid its hands on me, like a bailiff on an absconding debtor. This mere dejection, however, which was after all useless, in time gave way to reflections that were more profitable. I thought of our modern Radicals, of our

sentimental believers in the natural goodness of man, and of what a lesson these people might learn from Cyprus. Here were no wicked plutocrats, no hereditary aristocracy. The merchant princes and the nobles of the Middle Ages had gone. They had not left even the memory of their names behind, and modern times had produced no class to replace them. The larger part of the population owned the larger part of the soil. They worked by themselves and for themselves. They had no example except their own to corrupt them, and no oppression except that of the necessary tax-gatherer. They lived, in fact, under the Radical's ideal conditions; and yet crimes, which included crimes of the most brutal and degraded character, occurred amongst them with a frequency not to be matched in any country of aristocratic and capitalistic Europe. Surely this in itself is enough to show how false, or at best how insufficient, is the theory, that the wickedness of the many is caused by the artificial oppression of the few.

If a man wishes to ensure the bad opinion of others, his best course probably is to be honest about himself. At the risk of achieving this result

though I do not profess to be anxious for it, I am going to indulge in a piece of honesty here. I am going to confess that the foregoing obvious moral, being at the expense of people with whom I specially disagree, if it did not exactly reconcile me to the miserable facts that suggested it, at least made me look at them in a less lugubrious light. In the middle of this mood a slight sound disturbed me. I looked round, and there—with her feet on a bed of violets—was poor Metaphora, blowing her nose in her petticoat.

Poor Metaphora! She seemed to reconcile me to everything. She again supplied us at dinner with unfailing amusement, and afterwards Colonel Falkland, when we were smoking our cigarettes together, asked me if I ever had heard this strange creature's history. I had not, and so he told it to me. "Metaphora was once in prison," he said. "Metaphora was tried for murder. Yes," he went on, "I can see what I say surprises you. What happened was this. Some years ago, just before we came here, she—she was hardly fifteen—was seduced by a Turkish official. She had twins, and both of the twins were murdered. She was accused

of the crime and tried for it, but medical evidence showed her to have been at the time so weak that she could not have committed it—it was a physical impossibility. The real criminal was probably her mother. Anyhow, the event for the time—and I am sure it is no wonder—quite deranged the poor girl's faculties, and to this day she has never quite recovered them. So the other night," he added, " when Mrs. Falkland called her half-witted, what she said had more truth in it than perhaps at the time you thought."

This was enough, and more than enough, to make the morbid clouds of dejection, which had only partially lifted, once more descend on me. " And so," I said to myself, " this delightful city of Nicosia —this city of dreams and peace—is haunted by all the plagues and all the sorrows of London, and the lightest and silliest laughter to which one goes for refuge has its hidden roots in an unnatural pool of blood." As I went to bed, and for some hours tried vainly to sleep, the air seemed heavy and oppressive as if charged with thunder, and I was pleased to think that on the following day I was going to escape to new, even if not very distant, scenes.

CHAPTER XIII

A VILLA AMONGST THE MOUNTAINS

OUR generation, accustomed to rapid travelling, is apt to think of the times when railways were not as if they were divided by some great gulf from our own. My own impression is, that if railways vanished to-morrow we should, as mere travellers, soon become reconciled to the change. In Cyprus I was able to put this impression to the proof, for the conditions of travelling there are just what they were in England, I do not say merely before the first railway was made, but a generation and a half before the first railway was thought of. The roads for the most part are such that, except for the shortest journey, an ordinary carriage requires from three to five horses, and the distance, reckoned in time, from one place to another is just what it was in England in that seemingly remote period when

Reading was as far from London as Edinburgh is now.

This was all brought home to me vividly the following morning. Mr. St. John's house was hardly sixteen miles from Nicosia, and yet the coachman had sent me a message, to say that with four strong horses we should be four hours in getting to it. I had arranged accordingly to start as early as possible. The air, as I came downstairs, was fresh and crisp in the garden, and touched my face with the effect of a mental tonic. I had only half done breakfast when Scotty came to inform me that the carriage was at the door, and that all the luggage was in readiness. The entire household assembled to see me start, including Metaphora, who frisked, and grinned, and giggled. There, in the narrow street, was the battered and dusty vehicle with my portmanteaus tied behind to it like a lady's dress-improver, and a tribe of Turkish children staring at the imposing spectacle. It was a vehicle of curious pattern. It resembled a barouche, surmounted by the canopy of a four-post bed, the curtains of which were drawn close at the head and foot, and tied

back with ragged tape at the sides. As I entered it I had a glimpse of four sinister horses; Scotty climbed laboriously to a high seat by the driver, and we started to the sound of a whip that made all Nicosia echo. Our pace was surprisingly—indeed I thought dangerously—good, as we whirled round corners and sent goats and Oriental figures flying, and before many minutes we were out in the open country.

There, under the blowing breath of the wide Cyprian morning, the last remnants of dejection fluttered away like cobwebs. I have already spoken often of the magic of this marvellous air, and it is tiresome to be speaking of the same thing continually; but, though the air may be the same thing, the effects of it were never the same. Every landscape in the island it made like a live chameleon, always iridescent with melting and changing colour; and what it did to the mind was every bit as various. To those who despair of ever being really happy in life—by which, I suppose, I mean two classes of men, those who are familiar with thought, and those who are familiar with pleasure—when at any time thought or pleasure has taught its lesson to them

anew, to such men I would say: "Try breathing the air of Cyprus." As for myself, what I felt when I submitted to its charm that morning was a buoyant calm, on which complaisant meditation floated, and in which the immediate future cast pleasant reflections.

The road, it is true, was at first not interesting, as for many miles it lay over a perfectly dead level, with hardly a cottage or a palm tree to break the monotony of the prospect. For a mile or two outside Nicosia it was in very tolerable order, but after that it rapidly got worse. In several places it was little more than a track only too well indicated by ruts in the hardened mud, and then from hardened mud it would change to shelving sand. The movements of the carriage changed their character accordingly. The commonplace briskness and smoothness with which we started now became a slow laborious jolting, or else, where the sand was, a kind of muffled crunching and plunging that was slower and more laborious still. Then it was that thoughts of our old-fashioned English travelling came crowding into my mind; and I had the satisfaction of feeling that, so far as travelling went,

I was living in the England of eighty or a hundred years ago. I asked myself how this affected the aspect of daily life. Did it make me conscious of any want—of the loss of any ordinary convenience? Not in the least. The very idea of railways had almost faded from my mind, and without any regret, or comparison, or sense of irksomeness, I had come to regard post-chaises as the most natural means of travelling. And how did this affect my conception of distance? Did it make near places seem remote and remote places inaccessible? No—not in the sense of producing any feeling of practical helplessness. I felt as able as if I were in England to get from one place to another. The only difference was that it seemed to me as if the landscape were larger and all its far perspectives were softly and indefinitely deepened. Railways and steamers may perhaps widen the mind, but they do so at the cost of making the world smaller.

This train of reflection was in due time interrupted by our arrival at a village, where the horses stopped to rest themselves; and in place of reflecting, I now began to observe. All the boys

and the dogs assembled to stare and bark at me; and presently there came to my ears, I could not tell from where, a sound which I recognised as the Syrian wailing for the dead. Beyond the village a quite new sight presented itself, and this was a green common dotted with clumps of rushes, its grass being as close and fine as any that could be found in England. Here and there about it ran a few little threads of rivulets: it was another example of the power of water over the Cyprian soil.

Beyond the common I found myself at the base of the mountains, or rather of a number of low outlying hills, which resembled nothing so much as so many heaps of mud shot here at random by the carts of Titan scavengers, and which not even the air of Cyprus could prevent from being frankly hideous. Up these and amongst these we now began to toil. The road itself was little more than a ledge, rudely cut along the sides of intricate slopes, and was constantly dangerous, without ever being impressive. But at last we rose to the slopes of what may be properly called the mountains; and high in front of us a gash in the gray sky-line

marked the pass which looked down upon Kyrenia. And now beauty began once more to show itself. To the left were peaks upon peaks whose forms and names were unknown to me, and some twelve miles off to the right were the familiar summits of Pentedactylon. The road now was in far better condition. Huge limestone boulders glittered on either side of it, between them were tufts of myrtle; and soon, as we mounted higher, all the stony slopes and scarred sides of the gorges were green with the fairy spires of a far-reaching infant pine forest. The ascent was so slow that I got out and walked some way. New aromatic smells seemed to be abroad in the air. I looked back, and below me were the plains of Nicosia like a sea, with Nicosia itself like a vague dim circle in the middle of them. Short as the distance was that I had really travelled, I had all the sensation of approaching a fresh country. The variety of travel is in the inverse proportion to the speed of it.

At last I topped the hill. I was there before the carriage, and I stood in the pass surveying the scene on the farther side. Its beauty exceeded every expectation I had formed. Some of its

features indeed I had seen before on the ever-remembered day of my first search for the marble. There were the blue sea and the Cilician coasts beyond it; and nearer at hand was Kyrenia at the water's edge, like a water-lily. But there was another beauty which completely took me by surprise. This was a sudden luxuriance, a sudden exuberance, of vegetation. The pines were no longer saplings. There were strong and stalwart groves of them; nor was theirs the only foliage that filled and fascinated my vision. To right and left the mountains from their topmost pinnacles fell in a succession of varied and indented slopes to shadowy valleys a thousand feet below them; and all the steep sides of these silvery amphitheatres were dotted with a multitude of dark-green climbing caroub trees. Before me in crumpled curves was the road descending into the distance, sometimes hidden in a cutting, sometimes by a projecting rock, and again reappearing on the brink of some folded hollow; and every hollow and valley, so far as my eye could distinguish, was green and soft with a crowd of various leafage. Near me in a gorge were the tops of a thicket of

oleanders, on a ledge a little way off was a large slender acacia, and on the lower levels, though all details vanished, I recognised the green of grass and a medley of terraced olive-yards.

Mr. St. John's house was, I knew, some way out of Kyrenia, but I knew no more than that either of its locality or its situation. Scotty, however, with a wag of his head towards the coachman, had already said to me, "Right, sir. This fellow, he know." So when, overjoyed with the prospect, I again entered the carriage, I resigned myself without anxiety to the passive pleasures of expectancy. We had not, however, proceeded for more than half an hour—we were still amongst the mountains, and Kyrenia was still far below us—when the coachman stopped his horses, and Scotty, scrambling down, came to me and said with a certain air of apology, "This fellow, he ask is it this house you want to go to?" "What does he mean?" I exclaimed, when I got out and looked about me. "Where is the house? I can see no house anywhere." The road at the spot where we had halted was beginning to grow steep, and was curving round the sides of an acclivity which below

lost itself in a gorge, and above, covered with myrtles, seemed to rise to a lofty plateau. Here a sandy and most uninviting track branched off, and at some impossible angle ran upwards and lost itself in the leafage. "Where is the house?" I repeated as soon as I had looked round me. Scotty pointed to the track and said, "This fellow say it there." Seeing me look incredulous, he added with more firmness what he might, one would think, have as easily said at the beginning, "That where the judge lives; the driver, he know it well." "Can he drive up?" I asked. "Yes, sir," said Scotty. "Get in, sir." I got in, still feeling somewhat doubtful, and the four horses, in a way that was truly marvellous, took the ascent with the activity and enterprise of goats. Their pace, however, was soon quenched by the sand, and a moment or two later I heard Scotty's voice calling to me, "I think, if you please, sir, the gentleman he here."

I got out, and there, sure enough, to my great relief, was my host advancing to meet me. He was a youngish man, with all the air of a sportsman, and his smile was already a welcome, even before he opened his mouth. But the curious

thing was this: in the place where I might have looked for a house I could see nothing but a white circular tent, which was shining and swaying on the very brow of a precipice. Mr. St. John directed the coachman to stop at this flimsy structure, and he and I began to walk up towards it. "Do you see that?" he said, with an air of enthusiasm. "There's not another like it in Cyprus. It's a real Damascus tent. Just wait till I show you the inside of it."

I went with him, hardly knowing if I were standing on my head or on my heels.

"If you'd only come," he resumed, "an hour earlier you'd have seen my tandem—two thoroughbred Arabs. That's right," he shouted to Scotty, "down with the luggage! and let him turn his horses there; it's the only place where he can turn." In another moment we were at the tent ourselves. My host lifted the hangings. "Look!" he said; "do you see the lining?—blue, crimson, orange. They only do that work at Damascus. Go inside; I'm quite sure you'll be pleased."

I entered, and he followed me. "Well," he exclaimed, pointing to what confronted us, "don't

you call that perfect? To my mind it's beautiful!" I said that it was, and eyed it slowly and carefully. The object of our attention was a new English-built dog-cart, which had only arrived a few days ago, and which, together with the two thorough-bred Arabs, formed, for the present, the joy of their owner's heart. "Just now," he said, "I am rebuilding my coach-house, and meanwhile I keep this trap in the tent. The drive in front of the house is so blocked up by the masons that carriages can't turn there, and so they must stop here. Come, let us go up. I hope you don't mind a climb. It's nearly two o'clock; I think you must want some luncheon."

Everything now wore quite a different look for me, and I felt that I was once more in a world of calculable circumstance. The ascent of my host's road was indeed an affair of climbing, and I shuddered at the thought of a carriage coming down round its frightful corners. Some twenty paces or so brought us in sight of the house. It stood on a height above us, surrounded with gorse and myrtle; a habitation absolutely solitary, in a scene of leaf and precipice. In appearance it was

a cross between a white English villa and a brown Swiss cottage, having the solid core of the first and the surrounding balconies of the second. It was a strange object in such a place, but it was strange in a piquant and agreeable way, filling the air with a swarm of far-fetched and subtle associations, which made one feel bewildered as to where one was. The interior completed this peculiar mental effect. The white pavement of the passage, the walls, the chairs—everything, instantly suggested the daintiest civilisation of England, simplified and etherealised by the air of these lonely mountains. At home the simplicity would have been probably called bareness, but here it was exactly what the conditions demanded. The carpets, from Karamania and Smyrna, covered but half the floors; the beautiful coloured matting in the bedrooms might have seemed rough in London; but here such asceticism of taste was the very refinement of luxury, and harmonised, as none of our more elaborate comforts could, with the flowers, the books, the blue Vallauris vases, and the cascade of fairy-like notes that chimed from a Bond Street clock. Cyprus, in fact, gave a sense of remoteness to the

house; the house gave a sense of elusive civilisation to the mountains; and the warm air which floated in through the windows seemed at once as much at home and as strange in this exotic dwelling, as if its walls had been the petals of some unknown anemone which from some foreign seed had blossomed up there out of the soil, half a native and half an alien.

Such were the impressions which formed themselves in my mind as I sat at luncheon, and to which the luncheon contributed by its own delicate simplicity, by its cold meats, its goats'-milk cheese, its conserve of golden apricots, and its jug of Cyprian wine. My host and his family, of whom he presently spoke to me, had already had their meal. The children, he said, under the charge of the governess were somewhere in the neighbourhood amusing themselves. Mrs. St. John had gone out to look for them, and would soon be back with the eldest two of the four. "I tell you that," he proceeded, "because we have been thinking this. You want, I know, to see the Castle of St. Hilarion. It is on the mountain directly behind the house. You can go there easily this afternoon, and spend

an hour there, and, if you like it, Mrs. St. John and one of the boys will come with you. I have things to do myself, or else I would come also."

No proposal could have been more charming than this. Needless to say I jumped at it, and I was still expressing my satisfaction when a shadow darkened the window, and gliding past it was Mrs. St. John herself. She will, I know, not think it an impertinence if I venture to speak of her as slim and graceful, and to say that she seemed to me the moment she entered the dining-room like the embodied spirit of her house, as I have just tried to describe it.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CASTLE IN THE AIR

OUR expedition was soon arranged. Mrs. St. John and her eldest boy would ride. I was offered a mule, but I greatly preferred to walk. In a quarter of an hour we were all of us setting out, the boy on a white donkey, his mother on a white horse. We scrambled through a breach in a wall from the yard behind the house, up a shoulder of hill, which at first was rough with brushwood, but which higher up was under some rude cultivation. Beyond this was a table-land, also cultivated ; then a thicket of gorse ; then a dip in the ground, ribbed with curving furrows and crowned with a further thicket. The same alternation went on repeating itself of rocky, bush-grown ridges and rudely-cultivated hollows ; but all the while we were, on the whole, ascending. At last there opened before us a great gash in the mountains, which

showed us the sea and the coast-line far below, and made us feel that already we had climbed high into cloud-land. Our real climbing, however, had not yet begun. On the farther side of this opening rose a stupendous cliff, which looked as though it were dizzy at its own altitude and were on the point of hurling itself down through the depths of the unobstructed air. Scaling the side of this, amongst endless rugged projections, there could just be traced a pale faltering line, looking like an impossible goat-track. I found it in another ten minutes to be the track that we were to traverse ourselves. On foot certainly it proved to be easy enough, but it was so steep at its turnings, and everywhere so rough, so narrow, and so littered with rolling stones, that as I looked down into the aërial abysses below me I confess I felt glad that I was on my own feet, which were prudent, and not on those of a horse like Mrs. St. John's, which pattered and clambered upwards with an almost criminal levity.

When we reached the summit the view before us was this. The serrated summits of the mountains were running like a wall to our left, rising

above us some four or five hundred feet; and under their shadow, for several miles in front of us, there extended a sheltered valley, of which certain parts had been ploughed. On the outer edge of this, forming a sort of gorge, about half a mile off, rose a huge isolated rock, shelving in a savage abrupt way towards the mountains, but dropping towards the sea in a single appalling precipice. At a first glance its form struck me as curious; at a second glance I saw that it was covered with masonry. What I had at first taken to be a number of natural crags, I found to be a row of towers rising one above the other like a break-neck garret staircase, from a wall that climbed the eminence at an angle of forty-five. From the lower end of this wall other walls extended themselves, with other towers, enclosing a vast sloping area. On a shoulder of the rock towards the sea was a crowd of confused buildings, whose dark windows showed that the interior was still not roofless; and high above all was the summit, over whose seemingly inaccessible ledges crenellated walls peered, crowned with yet loftier towers.

And so this was the Castle of St. Hilarion! I

looked at it speechless with gratification. It could not have been better if it had been built after one of my own dreams. Indeed, as we traversed the valley, and came more and more nearly under it, what it suggested to me, with greater and greater vividness, was the fancy that it had been built after a dream of Gustave Doré's.

From the bottom of the valley up to the lowest buildings was a climb amongst clods and rocks of at least two hundred feet. This brought us to a line of long gray walls, broken at intervals by semicircular towers, and at one point flanked by a sort of out-work or barbican, through which we entered under an arch that had almost fallen. Wading through weeds, between broken walls and turrets, we presently found ourselves in the court, if that can be called a court which was so steep that it seemed about to fall on us. It was mottled everywhere with thick brushwood and gray stones that looked like natural boulders, but which I saw presently were fragments of fallen buildings. Then here and there, in lines that were half obliterated, I detected amongst the brushwood traces of broken walls; and it was presently plain to me

that what I have called the court must originally have looked like a town, built on a steep hillside. I had arrived at this conclusion, when Mrs. St. John, who knew the place, began to call my attention to one or two of its details. She pointed out to me two dark apertures, one in a level plot, the other in a bank of rock. I examined the first, and I found that a stone staircase led down to a series of vaulted rooms. I examined the second. It led into a great gallery, partly cut in the rock and partly the work of masons. Here Mrs. St. John followed me, and high up in the walls she pointed out to me a long series of rings. According to architects, she said, this was the stable for camels, and those were the rings to which were fastened their halters.

Our next move was to clamber somewhat higher and make our way to the buildings below the summit. The approach to them was curious. It lay along the foot of the overhanging precipice, between the natural rock and the ruins of a lofty wall, which together with the rock had once formed a gallery. At last a small doorway admitted us to a vaulted vestibule, with stairs in it leading to

upper and lower chambers. The disposition of these it is impossible to describe to the reader, for this reason, if for no other, that I could not master it myself. I began my explorations by mounting. I came to a curious loggia, which exhibited three natural pictures through its three open arches—silvery mountain slopes on which pine trees showed like pigmies, the sea, and the unfathomable depths of country lying below. Then through some crooked passages and up some winding stairs, straying fortuitously, I came to a small chapel, with fragments of frescoes still clinging to the apse and with two priests' chambers leading out of it. Retracing my steps, I discerned, in spite of the twilight, that there were frescoes in the passages also. Then there came more stairs, more rooms and passages, and then I began descending. At the door where we had entered Mrs. St. John was waiting for me; and we now took the steps that led to the lower regions. Here was a crowd of heavily-vaulted rooms, with small chinks for windows, through which the daylight glittered. Their number and variety of level was all I had time to remark about them; and then

down some more steps, through a narrow pointed doorway, we issued into the open air, and I found myself on the most singular spot I ever remember to have visited. It was a little grassy triangular space of ground, bracketed out, on the enormous seaward precipice, and seemed to have been once a garden. Beyond it, also hanging on the brink of the precipice, was an oblong building with a flat grass-grown roof and an arched doorway; and again beyond this, on a sharp, projecting crag, was a mass of masonry, roofless, but absolutely perfect, which a second glance showed me was a colossal cistern. I entered the first of these structures through some brushwood that choked the doorway, and I found myself in a suite of chambers with Gothic windows and beautiful groined roofs. They had originally been six in number, three above and three below; but the intermediate flooring had long since given way, leaving, however, all the way round the walls a ragged fringe of mosaic, eloquent of unknown occupants.

When I came out, I seated myself with my companion on the ground, and we looked about us, contemplating the strange scene. The part of

the castle through which we had reached this solitude now revealed to me a number of architectural features—chimneys and gables, and traces of high-pitched roofs, which reminded me of many a baronial ruin in Scotland; but what struck me most was what I saw as I looked upwards. The sides of the rock above us, which seemed to rise to the clouds, on every ledge showed fragments of windowed walls, as if half of its sides had once been cased with chambers, and over the brink at the summit appeared an arch and a few battlements.

I looked up at these last as if it were hopeless to reach them, for the face of the cliff showed no mode of ascent except the line of a sheep path just traceable intermittently on masses of headlong débris, which had fallen amongst rocks and saplings. My surprise therefore perhaps exceeded my pleasure when Mrs. St. John in the quietest way in the world pointed to the very path and proposed that we should go up it—a path on which, so far as the eye could tell, a single false step meant a helpless fall into eternity. Under the circumstances, however, I put my fears in my pocket.

I was also intrepid enough to burden myself with my camera, and with all the heroism of which false shame is so prolific I proceeded to lead the way. As for Scotty, poor man, climbing was not his forte, and he looked so exhausted at the very gates of the castle that I left him behind to amuse himself by making tea for us, and several times I had taken a backward glance at him lighting a fire and wiping his brown face with his jacket.

The ascent we were now engaged in, though not less steep than it looked, was easier. At the summit we found the arch, whose top we had seen already, and this admitted us into a spacious quadrangle, of which two sides were formed by buildings, and two by natural rock, capped by towers and battlements. All the ground was a chaos of fallen building stones, amongst which were standing some fig trees, with far-spreading twisted branches, whilst grass grew with a soft luxuriance that surprised me, and massed in various groups was a sisterhood of secluded anemones. Across all this we passed to the farther side, as my companion had said that the sight of the place was

there. And there I found it was. It was a long banquet hall, about seventy feet by twenty, of which both ends, vaulting and all, were perfect, but the middle completely ruinous. This hall formed the whole of one side of the quadrangle, and its outer wall was on the very brink of the precipice. Below were the tops of pine trees, that clung to ledge and crevice, and it would not have needed a strong arm to throw a stone that would have fallen 2,500 feet. Presently, looking up through the broken roof, I saw that above it was an upper story, roofless. "Come," said Mrs. St. John, "you will like to examine that. Local tradition calls it the Queen's Lodging." She took me into the court, and I saw—what I had not before noticed—a wide external staircase, by which this upper story was reached. We ascended the weather-worn stairs, which yet had mouldings on their edge, and reached the broken floor of these broken upper chambers. Overlooking the precipice there still remained several of the beautiful windows by which they once were lighted. The mullion of one and the tracery above it were entire; the others reared in the air nothing but branching fragments:

but each retained entire two stone seats in the recess formed by it in the thickness of the wall, and in one of these recesses Mrs. St. John and I sat down. Leaning from the window, I examined the face of the rock. So broken and irregular was this that in many places the walls rested on arches flung across rifts and chasms. The masonry seemed like a chamois leaping from crag to crag, and the whole place for a moment or two was like one of those dreams which end with the sleeper falling from some frightful and unimaginable height. I felt that it must all give way and send me descending into space with it.

By and by Mrs. St. John said meditatively, "What a work it must have been to build this! It is supposed that the stones were brought up on the backs of camels, and the workmen must most of them have been slaves." As she said this a host of thoughts and images, which had been long latent in my mind, now made their shapes visible. I bethought me of the little I knew of the castle's history—that it was founded in the twilight of early Byzantine times; that it was an ancient stronghold in the days of Isaac Comnenus; that

at his orders it surrendered to Richard Cœur de Lion; that since then, as its architecture plainly showed, it had been enlarged and embellished by the kings of the house of Lusignan; and that finally the Venetians had, for strategical reasons, destroyed its strength by shattering its towers with gunpowder. Then came thoughts of what a life, during the days of its glory, had been lived in it, what a strange, hybrid civilisation had blossomed here in mid-air. I seemed to see on the turrets the banners of Western chivalry, with the lions of the Lusignans and the sign of the Cross undulating on them, and then at the windows the flicker of silken Asian curtains. I had visions of Christian ladies going softly in a heathenish splendour, which the Europe of that day would have hardly credited; of knights in velvet doublets or flashing armour; of priests and princely bishops. Here from a chapel floated a scent of incense, there from a balcony came the sound of a tender lute and a love-song in mediæval French; and mixing with all these images were others of an alien kind —strange dusky forms in Oriental habiliments, some waiting like genii to do the bidding of their masters

in court, in ante-chamber, or on staircase, others leading up the mountain pathways winding trains of camels. Finally, my thoughts came winging to the spot where I myself was seated, and busied themselves with the dim forgotten queens, who from the very seat I occupied, and out of that very window, must have often gazed down into the stupendous depths below.

The view was towards the sea, and beyond the lilac waters there were my friends the mountains of Asia Minor, which each time I looked at them had maddened my imagination. Framed in this Gothic window, cut by their Christian mullions, they seemed to me now to assume a new aspect. They were like the pagan world seen through the eyes of the Middle Ages and heard with its ears; and mixing with its litanies, psalms, and knightly love-songs, came wafted across the waves the pipings of Pan and Marsyas.

Cilicia! Phrygia! As I looked I repeated the words to myself. In the smallest fragment of matter which the imagination can represent to us we learn from science that there are unnumbered atoms, and that these atoms are all of them in

unceasing movement. So in some simple words there are tribes of meanings and of memories.

"We ought to be moving," said Mrs. St. John at last. "It will never do for us to be benighted in these mountains." Her words restored me to the present, with all its silence and solitude, and put an end to that revel of dreams which had just been making my mind a Field of the Cloth of Gold.

But the waking was merely the waking from one charmed existence to another. Far underneath us, between the mountain base and the sea, lay a belt of groves and olive-yards, dotted with gleaming villages, and fringed with little promontories that ran into the waves like mulberry leaves. From amongst these, as if from some submerged world, up through the air came a musical tinkle of goat bells and the miniature shouts of undistinguishable human beings. Around us the ruined masonry enclosed an enchanted quiet. Near us on the floor, which the queen's feet once had trodden, lay the bleaching bones of a kid, the remains of some vulture's feast. Nothing that we could see moved, except the bells of some near anemones,

and a vulture itself overhead, wheeling in slow circles.

We remained for a few minutes longer, that I might take a photograph, and we then descended. In the lower court was Scotty, who had some tea ready for us, and having drunk it we made haste to be gone, as the light was already waning. We had reached without difficulty those lower regions of alternating thickets and plough-land which I have already mentioned, when suddenly, on a level space littered with stones and bushes, Mrs. St. John checked her horse and said we had missed our path. Scotty maintained that we were on the path we had come by; Mrs. St. John, however, remained certain of the contrary. We discussed landmarks and looked for them, and as we did so we realised how quickly the evening had fallen with its bewildering twilight. We retraced our steps for some distance; we tried another path, and then again another. For some time I had faith in Mrs. St. John's knowledge of the locality, but presently this failed me. There was indeed little to guide her. The mountains were nothing but dim, mysterious masses; the shape of the ground near us was all

but lost in the obscurity, and all we could see was the shadows of dark bushes and endless multitudes of pale, glimmering stones.

"Come," said Mrs. St. John at last, "we must take the path by the valley. There is a mule track, which we are certain to find, leading down to the Kyrenia road." I had noticed this track as we went, and I willingly agreed to her proposal. It lay now about half a mile behind us; so we turned back towards it with all the expedition possible, I walking in front to examine the nature of the ground. Before long I heard a slight sobbing in my neighbourhood, and also a sound like the bleat of a plaintive sheep. I turned round, and discovered that they both proceeded from Scotty. He was thoroughly frightened, and thought that we should never reach home again. "Sir, sir," he cried, "this is not the right way. The other I know he right. You and me, sir, we will go back by the other. Come, sir—you come, sir!" "What!" I exclaimed; "and, even supposing it is right, do you think that we can go and leave this lady and her little boy amongst the mountains?" "No, sir," said poor Scotty collapsing, "it is true, sir; what you say is true, sir."

The mule track at last was reached. We were just able to distinguish it, but its headlong course gave it the aspect of a precipice. However, we went down it, though not without great difficulty, Mrs. St. John's white horse at the angle of every zigzag threatening to fall with its rider crashing into the darkness. At last our course became easier and more level, and at the same time came the first glimmer of moonrise. "Sir," exclaimed Scotty, "I know this mule path now. It take us, if we go with him, half way back to Nicosia." I too began to realise something of our whereabouts, and I could well believe that what Scotty said was true. The Nicosia road, which I had traversed only that morning, I could see like a dim line on the far side of the valley; so, thinking anything better than a prolongation of our present experiences, I proposed that we should try to reach it by diving into the intervening hollow. I scrambled down the slope myself, feeling my way with my stick. The ground was better than I expected. I called to the others to follow. They did so. We had to explore every yard of the way; but at last, after half an hour of wandering, stumbling,

and considering, the road was reached, and we felt that practically we were at home again. In one sense we were not; for we had still three miles to go. It was nearly nine before we were in-doors, and Mr. St. John, though by no means a nervous man, would hardly have been human if he had not felt anxious. But dinner and lamplight were all the more grateful after the toil, the solitude, and the dim bewilderment of the mountains, and we were all in excellent spirits when George, the Greek butler, whose English was remarkably good, brought the following news to his mistress: "You can," he said, "now have as much milk as you want. Achilles tells me that all the goats have kittens."

Achilles was the cook: Euripides blacked the boots. I heard both these facts before I retired to bed, and I believe that when I went to sleep I was still smiling at the thought of them.

CHAPTER XV

AN OLD-WORLD FORTRESS

WHEN I awoke next morning the breath of the spring breathed on me. My bedroom windows admitted me to a balcony, the roof of which hid from view the summits of the opposite mountains. All around was a multitude of green valleys and gorges, and below, at some two miles' distance, were the walls and windows of Kyrenia. Mr. St. John told me at breakfast that he was going there presently on business, and offered to drive me down with him, that I might look at the town and castle. I was delighted with this arrangement till the moment came for starting, when voices called to me to come down to the tent, and I not only recollected but actually saw the tandem. From the tandem I glanced at the road —steep, with sharp curves, and bordered by a precipitous slope; and though Mr. St. John was

really an excellent whip, I had not at that moment the least reason for knowing it. However, any fears on my part would have seemed to any one present not only a folly but a rudeness, so I took my place behind the two thorough-bred Arabs with the calmness of a French aristocrat starting on his way to the guillotine.

I derived some comfort from the fact that we went with extreme slowness, and that a groom walked in front to take care of us round the corners; but when we were once in the public road, and the leader's head was satisfactorily turned towards Kyrenia, this guardian genius jumped up behind, and it seemed, as I looked before me, as if we had nothing between ourselves and eternity. The road was a steep zigzag, which no English coach would have descended without necessity. It was formed in many places by blasting the sides of a precipice, and below it all along were the abysses of a deep ravine. The appearance of it was hardly, in my eyes, mended by my host's conversation. "Just look at that leader," he said as the animal gave a frisk. "He was never in harness till ten days ago. He's a very high-couraged horse, but see how steady

he goes. Whoa, boy! whoa, boy! Where are you going, stupid?" This last exclamation was caused by a sudden bolt which the high-couraged horse made towards the edge of the precipice. "Ah," said Mr. St. John in explanation, "just there is a mule path, and whenever he sees one he's sure to try to go off on it." Whilst I was mentally congratulating myself on this escape from destruction the genial voice at my side kept begging me to confess that "after all there was nothing like a tandem;" and for the third time I was assenting, when, turning sharply round a horrible corner, we found ourselves confronted by a straggling procession of camels. The high-couraged leader shied across the road; the idiotic camel-driver shouted and brandished his long pole, and danced about madly like a cross between a child and a devil. The groom jumped down, and rushed to the leader's head, and treated the camel-driver to what I trusted was a volley of oaths. The camels defiled past, and presently we were on our way again. "Capital!" said Mr. St. John. "Did you notice what luck we had? If we had not happened to be on the wrong side of the road, ten to one that fool

with his pole would have sent us bundling over. Now," he continued, "we're almost down on the level. From here—you see—I will spin you into Kyrenia in no time."

To my great relief the road was from this point admirable. A gentle incline led to a long straight avenue, bordered with olive trees; and the fields on either side looked like a succession of fruit gardens. At the end of the avenue was the court-house with a sycamore tree in front of it, under which were a number of people waiting for the doors to be opened. I trust our arrival created a deep sensation amongst them. If it did not the fault was, I must say, wholly theirs.

Here Scotty was awaiting me; and leaving Mr. St. John to a morning of official duties, I wandered off in the direction of the sea and of the castle. My way took me past a ruined church and a mosque, and brought me to a wall overlooking the town and harbour. The town was little more than a single esplanade, curving prettily round a miniature port. The houses were all of stone, and were most of them neatly whitewashed, and had it not been for several strange features,

I could almost have fancied it a fishing town in Jersey or in Cornwall. One of these features was the collection of outlandish craft in the harbour, little lean misshapen schooners, mostly from Asia Minor; another was a Greek campanile; and another, which I might not have seen if I had not already been told of it, was a row of white posts on the quay, for securing the ship's cables. They were columns of snowy marble, taken from a temple of Venus.

Whilst I was studying this scene, the castle was directly behind me, separated from the road on which I stood by a deep artificial ditch. It was the last building at that end of the town, and its seaward walls had their base splashed by the breakers. I had already seen it from a distance, and its aspect I had not thought interesting. It was simply a square, plainly of great size, with bastions at three of its corners, and a round tower at the fourth. It seemed, indeed, to be less a castle than a fortress. But, now that I turned to look at it near at hand, I found it impressive in a way I had not expected. I knew that it dated from the days of the Byzantine emperors, and that though since their time it had been enlarged

and altered, the last hands to touch it had been those of Venetian masons, four hundred years ago. Such being the case, what first struck me with wonder was the utter absence of any sign of decay; and then my mind was filled with the mass and the perfection of the masonry. The walls, from the ditch to their summit, were seventy feet in height, and from bastion to bastion their length was four hundred feet. In the whole expanse there was not a single window. It was perfectly blank except for one rib of moulding, for a multitude of loopholes pierced at the top for musketry, and for an ominous line of rare oblong apertures, with low arches like half-lifted eyelids, behind each of which a cannon once was vigilant.

Besides these, there was but one other opening —a single narrow door not far from the sea, reached originally by a drawbridge, but now by an arch of stone. The English Government has used the castle as a prison; I had therefore been obliged to provide myself with an order to visit it. This was inspected by a sentry, who was basking on the bridge; and Scotty and I passed on into the

building. The door admitted us to a dark vaulted passage, about twelve feet in height and perhaps of equal breadth. For the first twenty feet it was level, then it turned an angle and ascended for sixty feet by a gentle slope towards the light. Midway was a locked iron gate, by which sat a man whose face and whose European clothing plainly bespoke him some one of superior station. He asked me, in perfect English, if I wished to see the castle, and called a sentry, who promptly gave us admittance. I had not expected to find there an official of so much education, and was greatly pleased when he put himself at my disposal as a guide.

The inclined passage had brought us into a small court, surrounded by massive buildings in a state of excellent preservation. On one side of it were two arched recesses, large enough each to shelter a couple of large waggons; opposite to them another incline led to some upper chambers; before us was a Gothic doorway, which admitted us into a shadowy hall; and through this we passed into the central court of the fortress. The general plan of the whole was now at once evident.

Halls and chambers originally had extended all round it, touching the outer walls ; but on two sides they were partly ruinous. The ruins, however, were of a very instructive kind, for they showed one a section of many of the old interiors. The whole of one side had been built in high compartments, with thick walls and heavily-vaulted roofs, and each compartment had been divided by wooden floors into three stories. These, my guide told me, had been the mediæval barracks. I asked him if the place had been simply a place of strength. "No," he said, "it was a palace also ; and that stone staircase, which now leads to nothing, is said originally to have led to the queen's quarters." When he said this we were on the ramparts, and the great court was below us. He pointed out to me some enormous subterranean cisterns, which a number of prisoners were clearing of ancient rubbish that had choked them, and also the foundations of buildings by which formerly parts of the court must have been occupied. Amongst these was a great hall of state, of which one wall, with its corbels, was still existing. I was then taken to some of the prisoners' cells, fortunately empty, and then to

the prisoners' kitchen. The lofty mediæval groining was here perfect and beautiful, and the ribs sprang from shields carved with the lions of the Lusignans. "And now," said my guide, "you would like to visit the chapel. It is Byzantine and very curious." We crossed the court to an opposite angle of the castle, and entered a quarter full of ancient chambers. The chapel was reached by a dark stair and a passage. In form it was a stunted cross, with four semicircular apses, and it was lit by an aperture in a dome that covered the centre. There were traces of frescoes still on the broken plaster, and the floor was still half covered with the old tesselated pavement.

And now there awaited me sights of a different order. I had heard already of the galleries which used to contain the cannon; and when I mentioned them to my guide, he at once said he would show them to me. When we regained the court, he called to a sentry for a candle, and, furnished with this, he took me to a black arch in a wall, which proved to be the mouth of a steeply descending tunnel. At the bottom of this was one of the galleries in question. The floor was slimy with mud,

which had been washed down the tunnel from above ; but this mud was the only sign of disuse—I might almost say the only suggestion of antiquity. The buildings I had just been visiting had the brown tints of time on them ; age had written its wrinkles on corbels and arch and column ; and there were everywhere traces of mediæval irregularity in the architecture. But here the cut stones were smooth as the brow of youth. The pointing was perfect ; four hundred years had done nothing to it ; every arch was symmetrical, and the gallery ran straight as an arrow. Nothing was wanting but the cannon, and a sufficient ignorance of engineering, to make one suppose that one was standing in some fort just built by the English, and just described by Mr. Labouchere as a waste of the people's money, and not under arches that had echoed their last to gunpowder before the Spanish Armada ever set sail for England. The castle above, like most ancient buildings, carried one away out of the present into the soft mystery of the past. This gallery, which was only one out of many, seemed to summon the past into the hard light of the present.

And yet, when I rose again to the brilliance of the blue Cyprian sky, and saw around me the silvery Cyprian mountains, and near me the bloom of the sea from whose foam Aphrodite rose, the charm of dreamland fell again over everything; and I said to the passing moment again, "Stay, thou art so fair."

It is true that I could see near me the unhappy prisoners at their work. But I could do no good by thinking of them, so I did not let them trouble me, and I had forborne purposely asking my guide any questions about them. This visit to a prison was, I said to myself, very different to the one which had darkened for me a whole day at Nicosia. Care, however, in one form had been dogging my footsteps even here, and the form it took was doubt as to this delicate question—Was my guide a person who would expect what is vulgarly called a "tip"? Or was his position so high, that even to offer it would be an insult? Having been troubled with this problem for some considerable time, I at last determined to solve it in the following way. I intended, if possible, though this intention was not fulfilled, to

pay another visit to the castle; so I told my guide to expect me again shortly, meaning meanwhile to inquire how I should treat him. "I hope," I said to him at parting, "I shall find you here on my return." In his melancholy refined eyes I saw the dawn of a smile. "Certainly, sir," he said, "you are sure to find me. I am a prisoner."

Mr. St. John, whom I asked about this gentleman afterwards, told me that he was the nephew of a rich Greek merchant in Liverpool; that he had been in his uncle's office, who had privately dismissed him for embezzlement; that he had then run off with the wife of one of his friends; that then he had come to Cyprus, where he had got himself employed by the Government; that presently he took to embezzling money again; and that the Government, not deterred by any uncle's tenderness, consigned him without mercy to the sort of quarters which he ought to have occupied seven years before. And yet, poor devil, I could not help liking him, and he looked as if butter would hardly melt in his mouth.

For the moment, however, as soon as I left the castle I forgot him with a heartless celerity, which

I did not then know he deserved. He was completely put out of my mind by an exquisite Corinthian capital and a marble slab covered with Greek inscriptions, which as I passed out over the bridge at once caught my eye, shining forlorn on a rubbish heap and facing the Gothic fortress.

I lunched with the commissioner of the district, a Scotch gentleman, who occupied a Turkish house overlooking the harbour. I washed off the dust of antiquity in a quaint Oriental bedroom, with a ceiling painted like those in the palace of Mr. Matthews. My entertainer received me in a large hall, spanned by pointed arches and strewn with light-coloured carpets. We looked out of the window at the pillars of the Temple of Venus, and then we quenched imagination in a dish of excellent curry. When I returned to Mr. St. John's, however, my imagination was once more craving. He and I made a second excursion to St. Hilarion. I drank the romance of the past like a glass of mental absinthe, and I arranged to go next day to seek for a yet deeper draught of it at the ruin of ruins, the wonderful Abbey of Bella Pais.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ABBEY OF HAPPY PEACE

FROM a distance I had already seen it, lying low on a spur of the mountains—a gray mass, embosomed in vague foliage. It was visible from the balcony in front of my bedroom window. It was barely four miles off, but Mr. St. John told me it would take me two hours to get to it, a fact I could hardly credit till experience showed me the reason. The reason was that the only road to it was a mule track, which traversed a series of deep ravines or valleys, and climbed amongst rocks over the steep ridges that separated them.

Yielding to advice, I again had recourse to a mule, Scotty and a guide accompanying me on two others. We took the road I had descended with the tandem yesterday till we came to the spot where the leader had first shown a liking for the precipice; and there the guide did what the

horse had mercifully forborne to do: he rode, as it seemed to me, like Marcus Curtius, directly over the brink into the chasm. I saw, however, on looking down, not his shattered remains, but a few rough rocks, like steps, descending some thirty inches at a time; and then came traces of a narrow winding path. Most of man's finest heroism is merely disguised necessity. So was mine, and I am certain so was Scotty's as we committed our destinies to the descent and followed our apathetic leader. But, after the first uncomfortable plunge, I felt as a diver might feel when he opens his eyes on the world of waves and shells and sea-weed. The world in which I found myself was just as surprising and beautiful. I was in a valley scented with myrtle and thronged with thickets of oleander, and at the bottom of it across the path a clear stream went murmuring out of the green shadow. As I was crossing it I stopped short, as if I had seen a ghost. It was not a ghost I saw, but a sudden mental vision of the world of bowery paganism seen by the eyes of Keats. I had a vision of shy nymphs and naiads; their limbs glimmered and their eyes peered through the oleanders; and I

felt that somewhere, on some neighbouring slope, a white sylvan altar was beginning to steam with incense. My mind's eye, it is true, saw this for a moment only, but it left the valley haunted with the air of the old mythology.

We all know with what rapidity in fairy stories the wandering hero passes from one kingdom to another. Quitting this valley, I passed with the same rapidity into scenes which, for some subtle reason, breathed a wholly different sentiment. Here, too, as I looked at pine-grove or rock, or at small rudely-terraced vineyard, bodiless presences showed themselves to that organ of sight which sees them. But they were not nymphs or naiads; they issued from a different stratum of history. Sometimes a knight in armour flitted like a shadow through the brushwood; sometimes in front of me plodded a mediæval pilgrim; once or twice I heard the voice of a troubadour; and near the vineyards I saw Provençal peasants dancing. No doubt my imagination committed many anachronisms and confused together many incongruous centuries; but the wayward pageant for me had a perfect inward congruity; nor could the spectacles

of any professor of history—not even those through which Professor Freeman makes faces at Mr. Froude—have shown me anything fit, for pleasure's sake, to be compared with it.

Nor were the real sights that saluted me less delightful than the visions with which they blended. The way continued to dip into rivulet-haunted dells, to climb bushy banks, and to skirt luxuriant slopes. Here and there through the world of greenness a living peasant came, with a sash like a red poppy, and sometimes a goat or two or a couple of desultory bullocks. The greenness was of all kinds and shades. Tall reeds grew by the shadowy rivulets; glossy caroub trees dotted stretches of sun-warmed soil; cypresses and poplars towered in slender companies; and here and there were the stem and spreading plumes of a date palm. Then, too, in constantly recurring patches, the earth was sprouting with all kinds of vegetables; and through the trunks of the trees shone the greenest and most luminous of grasses, responding to every slightest breath of air, with a shiver of tremulous emerald. The sky and the distant sea, both of the dreamiest blue—two shades of the same cloudless turquoise

—added their magic to the scene. On the Asian coast there was a faint delicate haze, behind which the line of mountains was lost ; but now and again, high up in the sky, there appeared the flashing of some Cicilian summit. The flowers, the wild thyme—— But I stop. Could my words be what I wish them, every one of them would be fragrant with thyme and myrtle ; the margin of every page would be a margin of breathing flowers ; and could I only convey to the reader the truth about this short journey, I should have planted for ever a new garden in his memory.

Hours like these—should we be grateful to them ? or do we owe them a grudge for mocking us ? That is not a senseless question. For half the charm of them lies below the sensuous surface and beyond the luxurious meditative stir of the imagination. It lies in suggestions of some elusive blessedness which might be ours if—— Who shall finish the sentence ? Could life give to us all that life suggests to us, there are moments when one might fancy that its chief evil was death.

Minor evils, however, would probably irritate us even in that case. A minor irritation was not

wanting to me that morning. It took the shape of poor innocent Scotty, who, whenever I was in the middle of some dialogue with myself or with nature, was sure to interrupt it with some irrelevant observation. When I was saturating my mind at one place with the romance of a hanging pine-wood, he turned round in his saddle and said this to me: "Once in a wood like that I shoot with a English gentleman. He was captain of English ship, and I there for interpreter. That was in Karamania. In Karamania are many wild pig." This is a mere Liebig's extract of a good five minutes' discourse which buzzed round my ear like a bluebottle, and which I had not the cruelty to kill. In another place we came to a roofless chapel—a little plaintive ruin still containing an altar. I was pausing to look at it when Scotty, seizing the opportunity, pointed in the direction of the sea and said, "There, sir, are many tortoise, but these fellows here are stupid; they never make no soup of him." *Tortoise* I saw was Scotty's version of *turtle*. For a moment a vision of green fat and Madeira crossed my mind like a swallow: I then dismounted and examined the broken walls.

On the far side of them some young trees, sprouting on the brink of a precipice, made a gray cloud of foliage; below was a deep valley with reeds and a stream at the bottom of it; and not a quarter of a mile beyond, glimmering amongst orchards and cypresses, were the traceried windows, the cloisters, and the flying buttresses of Bella Pais.

The Abbey of Happy Peace! If peace of any kind were an affair of locality, never was name more aptly bestowed than this. On the slopes behind it, also thick with cypresses, a village of white houses shone, embowered in gardens, which crept caressingly close to the abbey walls. The abbey itself stood on the brink of the cliff some hundred feet in height; and below it was a valley of palms, acacias, and oleanders. Our way lay through a straggling lane of the village. The houses were of stone and were neatly whitewashed, and many of them were fronted with picturesque arcades. The whole look of the place was somehow inexplicably superior to that of the mud-built villages in the neighbourhood of Nicosia. In all directions was a babble of running conduits, and women were passing with jars of water on their heads. One of these,

of whom Scotty inquired the way, pointed an old man out to us, who kept the keys of the building, and we presently reached it through an alley between two orchards. We entered by a gateway in a square Gothic tower, the upper part of which had disappeared and had been replaced by a tall Greek campanile. Within was a sunny orange garden and a dark fraternity of cypresses, and through the leaves and stems was a glimpse of pillars and pointed arches. From each side of the entrance-tower lofty and massive walls had evidently once extended, surrounding the whole abbey with a considerable fortified enclosure; but of these there remained only a few fragments, and their place was taken by the walls of neighbouring orchards.

Before inspecting the abbey itself in detail I hastily walked round it to arrive at its general plan. This was simple and can be described easily. It consists, or consisted, of a quadrangle, with the buildings ranged round it thus: The church occupied one side, the abbot's lodging another, the refectory a third, and the kitchen and the dormitories a fourth. Of these the abbot's lodging has entirely disappeared; but the church is perfect, the refec-

tory is perfect, and so are the kitchen and dormitories, excepting the roof and floors. Round all these ran an internal cloister, and this on three sides is absolutely perfect also. As for the church, it has now been appropriated by the Greeks, and is served by the parish priest; and Greek screens and galleries and second-rate garish gilding mar the solemn effect of the old Catholic columns. But in front of the west door is a beautiful arcade or portico like that which so much struck me before the cathedral at Nicosia; and there the only gold is the gold of the shining oranges, seen in the sunlight through arches of slender shadow. I sat down there on a crumbling seat of stone and ate a frugal luncheon, at which no monk need have been scandalised.

Then I explored carefully all the rest of the building. It was surprise on surprise of delicate spiritual beauty. As for the cloisters, through which I passed to the kitchen, they were much like those of Magdalen College, Oxford, and, excepting on one side, were almost as well preserved. The kitchen was half-choked with the fallen vaulting of its roof, and a crooked fig-tree grew in it. Perhaps the reader will think that in the kitchen, even of a

monastery, spiritual beauty is hardly the beauty one would find ; but the prevailing sentiment of the building penetrated every part of it, as its spirit was meant to penetrate every act of its inmates' life. And above was the floorless gallery, where once its inmates slept, with a small window and a little cupboard in the wall at each place where had once been a brother's bed. Where are the brothers now ? Where are their prayers and their vigils and their souls, of which some at least the most cynical charity may presume to have been white and taintless ? Modern science would answer, in the words of Villon —and it is the only answer it *can* make—" Where are the last year's snows ? "

Quitting this side of the building, I sought out the refectory. Its door opened from the cloister on the side facing the precipice and opposite to the church. I entered. I was in a magnificent hall more than a hundred feet in length, more than forty feet in height, and in width more than thirty. Nowhere a stone was chipped, nowhere an angle obliterated. Not York Minster nor Westminster Abbey could show, in all their roofs, groining whose ribs rose and met more gracefully, or more complete preservation

of the overarching stone. To another feature they could show no parallel at all—to the palms and oleanders on which the windows opened, and which, seen through this Gothic framework, looked like the work of sorcery. Presently I espied a passage leading to some regions beneath. I descended some broken steps which led me into a dim twilight, and, advancing a little, I came upon two crypts, perfect as the hall above, but not a third of its height, and sustaining their ponderous vaulting on low hexagonal columns.

Reascending, I again betook myself to the cloisters. Having seen the rest of the building, I could now devote myself to these; and for the first time I fully enjoyed the fascinating strange effect of them. I have already compared them to those of Magdalen; but for me they had suggestions not of Magdalen only, but of Melrose, of Dryburgh, of Fountains—I need not prolong the list. They were all Gothic cloisters in one; they were all the spiritual seclusions in which mediæval northern piety had ever walked and meditated; only they were sublimated into something lighter and more aërial; the shadows clung to their carvings with an unnatural crispness;

and the scene outside, which filled every arch like a picture, dazzled and bewildered the fancy till it seemed to be seeing double. Orange trees, palms, cypresses, the spires of silvery mountains, shining under a sky that gleamed like a single jewel—how should northern arches look out upon these? And that marble cistern sunning itself opposite to the door of the refectory, what was that? How came such an object here? It was a Roman sarcophagus, florid with the sculptured festoons of paganism. The sunshine and shadow slept on the silent floor, and I slowly for some time paced to and fro, trying to fix in my mind the shifting meanings of the place, which were making my imagination flicker like mother-of-pearl. It all seemed unreal, and yet at the same time so real that, as I looked up at the tangled arching roofs, whose ribs sprang from their columns like the curved stamens of flowers, it seemed as if they would compel the life they once sheltered to return to them.

At last it was time for me to go. I shouted for Scotty, who had considerately left me solitary. Where he had secreted himself I have no means of knowing; but he appeared from somewhere, in

response to my voice, with such promptness, that I seemed to have created him myself out of some block of masonry. The mules were brought to the gate, which the old man locked as we passed out; and at a slow pace I rode away in the sunshine, and left the Abbey of Happy Peace behind me. Warmth and sunshine followed me all the way home again—an emblem of the hours through which I had just passed, and over which, though melancholy had cast a shadow, it had cast a shadow only like that of a summer cloud. Experiences like these are always fresh to look back upon; one takes them away with one not dead but living; and memory, when it broods over them, is like the air of spring, every time opening new flowers.

It was five o'clock when I reached Mr. St. John's house again. The family were at tea in a room scented with violets; and there was present an afternoon caller, whose personality and conversation at once surprised and interested me. He was a man of forty or so, the owner of a fine estate in Scotland, who had taken a fancy to buy himself some land in Cyprus—a considerable area, not far from Kyrenia. He had built himself a hermitage

on it, consisting of a few rooms only ; and he spent there four months each year, amusing himself with what he hoped were improvements. For these he wanted a large amount of stone ; and it was in connection with this want that the interest of his conversation revealed itself. He told me that he had taken the advice of several natives as to how stone for building could be procured most easily ; and the advice given him had in every case been as follows—to buy house property on the Asian coast opposite, to pull down the houses, and ship the stones to Kyrenia. It appeared that what his advisers meant was this—that on the coast opposite there were ancient Roman towns, desolate as Pompeii, but apparently less dilapidated ; that the ruins could be bought for a song, and, though fit for nothing else, were the best material in the world for building cheap pig-styes. My informant added, " I have every reason to believe that such towns do really exist. A year or two ago I had here a Scotch mason and carpenter, and took them to the opposite coast with me for a cruise in a Greek caïque. On that occasion I went nowhere on shore myself, but these men did at one place, in the neighbourhood of

which there was said to be a ruined city. They came back to the vessel in the evening, telling me that the whole of the day they had been walking amongst friezes and architraves, columns, and plinths, and capitals—a wilderness of old carved marble."

Will the Protestant reader be shocked when I make to him an abrupt confession—that this day, which I had profaned by a pilgrimage to a Papist abbey, was Sunday? He will, of course, infer—and rightly—that I did not go to church; but there was an excellent reason for that—there was no church to go to. In the evening, however, I at least made a good end—and an end which at once befitted the Island of Flowers, the Island of Greek Poetry, the Christian Sunday that was ending, and the Catholic centuries that had ended. Mr. St. John, who was familiar with both ancient and modern Greek, had been telling me at dinner that in this part of the island the language of the peasants retained words and phrases not to be found elsewhere, as old as the days of Homer. One example of them he gave me has alone stayed in my memory—and that is the word *νόστον*, meaning "a return

home." Even that I should probably have forgotten, if he had not added further that the adjective *νόστιμον*, or "homeward-going," stands to-day in their dialect as a synonym for "lovely" or "desirable." A new pathos seemed, as I heard this, to gather round the *νόστιμον ἦμαρ*, which Fate took from Achilles. From topics like these we strayed to modern Greek generally; then to the modern Greek Bible, and from that to the Septuagint, and the differences between the two. There were copies in the room of both versions. We put them side by side, and set ourselves to compare their respective power and beauty. Two books occurred, as test cases, to both of us—Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. We picked out such verses and chapters as had stamped themselves most vividly on our memories, and verse for verse we read the old Greek and the new. It was a fitting end to a fitting day. As we read of the Rose of Sharon, of the myrrh, of the pomegranates, and of the gardens, the flowers in the room and the air that stole in from the mountains made me feel that my host's house was a lodge in a garden of spices, a garden enclosed, fanned with the winds of Lebanon; and then again, when

we turned over a few pages, and gave our attention to the other Book we had fixed upon, another voice stole through that of the Song of Songs, and whispered to the Mystical Rose the secret that all is vanity.

CHAPTER XVII

BEHIND PLATE-GLASS WINDOWS

THE following afternoon I was to go back to Nicosia, where I was to spend two days more with my kind friends the Falklands, and after that I was to migrate to Government House. The same carriage which brought me had been already ordered, and I was to start soon after luncheon. Meanwhile the man whose mules I had hired yesterday was coming up to be paid for them, and I asked Mr. St. John at breakfast, as I had not made a bargain, what was the price which he thought I might be fairly asked. He told me, and then, anticipating that I might be asked more, and pursuing a train of thought which the reader will easily follow, I resumed our last night's topic—that of the modern Greek language—and begged him to teach me the most blackguardly oath contained in it: an oath

which would have on an exorbitant muleteer the same effect that a stone has on a cur. He supplied me with what I wanted. Its sound was all that my fondest fancy could have painted—it was a mouthful of crunching syllables; but its meaning disappointed me by its mildness, as it merely expressed a wish that the object of the malediction might have the burial of a dog.

I found, when the time came, that I had not thus armed myself for nothing. The muleteer asked at least three times as much as law, reason, or custom gave him the smallest right to, and though Mr. St. John, who was with me, kept telling him this, he, with dogged persistence, kept reiterating his demand. I now recognised with delight that my opportunity was come. I loaded my mouth with the oath and discharged it in the rascal's face. But alas! despite all my efforts, as soon as I opened my lips it emerged in the form, not of an imprecation, but a laugh. At last, on Mr. St. John's advice, I produced what was properly due, deposited it on a stone, and said to the man as I walked away that there was all he would get; he might take it or leave it, as he pleased. He left it with some threat; but I learned

subsequently that as soon as I was gone he returned and went thankfully off with it.

When the hour for my departure arrived, though I was full of regrets at leaving, I felt a sincere satisfaction, as I got into my carriage and settled myself in comfort amongst a number of furs and rugs, that I was not going again to encounter the perils of Mr. St. John's tandem. I had with me a book with which to beguile the way (Professor Thorold Rogers' *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*), and as we quietly climbed the mountains to the pass above Nicosia, I was so much absorbed in it as to have almost forgotten the scenery. Some readers will possibly not think much of me for not having felt a like tranquillity in the tandem. I will, however, brave their further contempt by admitting that when my present driver began to trot down-hill I was not only annoyed by the jolting and swaying of the carriage, but was convinced that so rapid a descent on so bad a road was dangerous. I was just going to tell Scotty that I wished we should go slower when his voice, anticipating mine, called something out to me. I could not hear what he said, but by instinct I divined his meaning. I rapidly seized one of the

iron posts of the awning. At the same instant there was a lurch, a plunge, and a swerve, and the next half-second the world was topsy-turvy, as carriage and horses reeled over the edge of the road and fell with a crash on a slope eight feet below.

Had the accident happened thirty yards farther on our descent would have been, not eight feet, but eight hundred. As it was, the iron rod to which I had held had enabled me by its elasticity to break my fall so completely, that when I crept from under the awning, I did not even feel that I had been shaken. The horses were lying in a heap together; the driver was stupidly staring at them; and Scotty was crying like a child, though he was evidently quite unhurt. This being the case, I examined my camera and my dressing-bag; and, finding that neither had suffered, I had leisure to devote myself to my emotions. Scotty was expecting to see me storm at the driver, who, I afterwards learned, had, when one of the horses shied, jumped off the box, and quietly left us to our fate. Not knowing this, however, I found myself too much annoyed to be angry; and leaving the two men to look after the horses and the luggage, I walked five

miles ignominiously back to Mr. St. John's to seek assistance. Mr. St. John welcomed me with equal surprise and cordiality; he at once despatched assistance to the scene of the accident; and the following morning three mules were procured, on which I and my belongings were safely transported to Nicosia.

When the day came for me to quit Colonel Falkland's roof, though I had known its shelter for so short a time, I felt something of the sorrow of a boy who first leaves home for school. The impressions with which I associated it had been so many and vivid, that it seemed as familiar to me as if I had known it for a life-time. I was, however, only migrating from one scene of hospitality to another; and the hospitality in this latter case was made additionally pleasant from the fact that I found it amongst surroundings of an entirely fresh character.

Government House, as I have already mentioned incidentally, is outside Nicosia—about a mile and a quarter from the walls. It is not only entirely modern, but it will never become old. It will never become old, for it will have fallen to pieces first. It

is in fact an enormous wooden shed, surrounding three sides of a court, and consisting of a single series of rooms, with a verandah on either side of them. It was made in England for use in some totally different region, where it proved not to be wanted, and so it was sent here. It has been erected, or rather one may say pitched, on a dwarf eminence, overlooking a waterless river, and the plains stretching to the mountains ; and its boarded sides, and its red-tiled roofs, are by this time embowered in thickets of pines and eucalyptus trees. The court within has a fountain at the open end, a lawn-tennis court in the middle, and flower-beds round the borders, from which breaths of mignonette, when I was there, came wandering.

My first evening, though agreeable in itself, I felt rather flat as an incident of life in a remote country. If the rooms had not all of them opened into a verandah, and their ceilings risen at a sharp angle into the roof, I might almost have fancied that Cyprus had been a dream, from which I had just awoke and found myself disappointed in England. The walls were covered with familiar English papers. The carpets, though Eastern, had been

most of them bought in London, and suggested nothing but civilised English life; and the chairs, the sofas, and the books that littered the tables, had somehow an air of being within a day's journey of Piccadilly, and the Governor himself too, whom I will speak of under the name of Sir Robert—I had last seen him in Curzon Street, and Mayfair seemed to enter the room with him; whilst one of his two aides-de-camp, having been absent on leave for a month or two, had only returned the night before my arrival, and had brought with him news which generally evaporates in crossing the Channel, of balls, beauties, and marriages, and of one or two of those characteristic absurdities by which some people well known in society so often endear themselves to their acquaintances. There was also staying in the house a smart young officer from a regiment quartered at Limasol, with his pretty Canadian wife. They had lately been in Egypt, and were full of the gossip of Cairo. It all disturbed my sense of visionary seclusion. Finally, the dining-room and the dinner—English in every particular, excepting the presence of two Oriental footmen—came like a veil between me and the city of minarets, and the

myrtle-scented mountains whose breath I had been breathing above Kyrenia.

But the following day Cyprus reasserted itself, still looking strange and remote, though seen across London sofas, and touching the mind with a subtle change of aspect. That morning I enjoyed a new experience. About a mile off on the plain, amongst a grove of cypresses and sycamores, stood a Greek monastery, which I had often wished to visit. I happened to mention my wish to the pretty Canadian lady. The idea of it delighted her; she said she would come with me; and for the first time since I had been in the island I found myself setting forth, not as a meditative pilgrim, but in the mind and mood proper to a visitor at a country house.

The monastery itself was a square mud structure, surrounding a court that was half blocked up with a church. The monks' cells and refectory were simply whitewashed rooms, opening on untidy balconies; and they suggested nothing but farm-buildings out of repair. The suggestions of the court were similar. There were heaps of manure and puddles in it; and the monks themselves, who flocked out to inspect us, had about them a pathetic

air of the furrows. The faithful Scotty, who had tramped after us with my camera, induced them to stand in a group, whilst I took a photograph of their church. I then realised that there was an old woman amongst them, who so far as I could see must have been the monastic char-woman. I know the reader will not be shocked at this. Scandal itself would have been silent had she lived alone with St. Anthony. The photograph taken, several of the younger monks came peeping through the lens, expecting to see the picture. Meanwhile, the senior members of the fraternity pointed to the church, and invited us to enter it. We did so. It was a plain building, with whitewashed sides, and a heavy rounded roof; and, except for a screen at the end, was bare as an empty barn. I knew, however, beforehand, that here, surrounded by puddles and whitewash, was preserved a certain treasure unrivalled in Eastern Christendom. I soon saw where it was. The screen I have just mentioned was covered with saints painted on gilded panels: but one of these panels was only half visible; it was draped by a jewelled curtain of faded but rich embroidery, and hanging before

it were two burning lamps. Coming close to it, I saw that the panel, in place of a picture, contained a relief, in beaten gold, of the Madonna, the neck, the wrists, and the aureole being studded with precious stones. This was merely the veil, however, the outer covering of the real treasure —a thing far too precious for exposure: for behind that plate of gold was, or was supposed to be, the picture of the Madonna painted by St. Luke the Evangelist. Whether the relic is genuine it is not my province to discuss. Millions of Christians at least believe it to be so; and for the whole body of the orthodox it stands, as an object of pilgrimage, second only to the holy places of Jerusalem.

When we went outside again there was a certain stir in the court. From a stable door which I had not before noticed there was being led out a long train of camels. They gave to the scene an odd patriarchal character, as they passed through the gates, driven by a brown lay-brother; and when presently we followed them out ourselves, we saw them by some trees at a distance, drinking out of a stone cistern.

Before dinner that day I made another excursion —but where, or in what direction, it is quite beyond me to say. Sir Robert, who was generally busy the whole of the afternoon, was accustomed to take a constitutional as soon as his work was over, and at six he and I sallied forth together. The way to the monastery had lain over rich ploughed fields. Our present course took us over stretches of rugged moorland. The evening fell with its soft mysterious dimness, making the gray boulders glimmer, in vague shadow, and giving the low horizon an aspect of incalculable distance. Here and there we passed by a small eminence, whose sides were honeycombed with a number of black caverns. These, my companion told me, were rifled Phœnician tombs. By and by, far out in the solitude, like a sail at sea, we sighted a pale object; it was a forlorn Byzantine church, standing altogether alone. It proved to be a landmark, which showed we had walked far enough. We arrested our steps. I asked what the church was. Sir Robert knew nothing of its history; but at times, he said, there was still service in it. After a pause we turned. A soft wild wind sighed in our faces across the

furze ; and we retraced our steps over ground that was now hardly distinguishable.

A walk of this kind, and at this hour, with Sir Robert came to be a daily feature of my life at Government House. Another feature, almost equally regular, was a corresponding walk with him after breakfast about the garden—a walk which was constantly enlivened by patches of local colour. The colour in question was for the most part contributed by beggars, or at any rate by petitioners, with some want or grief or grievance. The rags of the men, and the robes and the veils of the women, looked in the sunlight as brilliant as Joseph's coat ; and their strange forms, as Sir Robert appeared in the verandah, would begin slowly to glide towards him, over the asphalt floor of the lawn-tennis court, as if he were a Sultan with power to right everything.

The rest of the day I had usually to myself ; and I rarely found that my lonely hours were vacant. Not to mention other occupations and amusements, I had plenty of work cut out for me in developing the photographs I had taken, and in exploring the innumerable pages of De Mas

Latrie's *History of Cyprus*. Amongst these, shortly after my visit to the Greek monastery, I was delighted to find the history of the renowned relic I had seen there. I hope the reader will be as much pleased at it as I was.

In the year 1090, Manuel Voutoúmitis, then Duke of Cyprus, was one day hunting amongst the mountains of Myriánthoussa. There, in the midst of forests full of wild animals, at that time dwelt a large number of anchorites—some in communities, some as hermits in lonely oratories. One of this latter class, by name Isaiah, was so shy and bewildered at sight of the duke coming that he scuttled out of the path into the bushes, quite forgetting to salute him. This scandalous conduct was more than the duke could stand. "What do you mean, sir," he shouted, "by not touching your hat to me?" And, rushing after Isaiah, he seized him roughly by the collar, called him all the names which his command of bad language supplied him with, and finally inflicted on him a chastisement so undignified that I will leave the reader to arrive at its nature from the sequel. The duke's foot miraculously withered up on the spot. Isaiah

turned and looked at him. The duke looked at Isaiah, and became convinced, possibly for the first time in his life, that he had made a serious mistake. In that extreme state of discomfort which often passes for repentance, he acknowledged his fault to his victim, and to all his spiritual advisers; and at last it was announced to him that he might be cured upon one condition. This condition was that he should procure and bring to Cyprus the picture of the Blessed Virgin painted by St. Luke, which the emperor Alexis Comnenus kept in his palace at Constantinople. To Constantinople the duke accordingly went, and Isaiah went with him. Both told their story, and begged for the precious gift. The emperor, however, though he did not refuse point-blank, kept putting them off from month to month with excuses, and at last offered them some money and two other pictures instead. Isaiah's patience was by this time exhausted. The duke, he said, might do what he pleased himself; but, as for him, he should at once go back to Cyprus. No sooner had he announced this resolution than the foot of the emperor's daughter, and, directly after, the foot of the emperor himself, withered up

exactly like the foot of Voutoúmitis. Then the emperor saw that he too had made a mistake. He hastened to do what had been asked of him. The three sufferers were cured; the relic was brought back in triumph to Cyprus, and the monastery of Kykko, which exists to this day, was built to receive and guard it. Kykko itself is amongst the mountains—a two-days' journey from Nicosia; but the monastery which I had visited belongs to the same foundation; and the relic had been brought down to it only last summer, with extraordinary solemnity, that it might procure rain for the plains, which were suffering from a disastrous drought.

The mention of monks, especially the monks of this monastery, reminds me that one morning I saw one of them on the lawn-tennis ground. What he could be doing there I at first could not conceive, and I thought of the ghost of the "black friar" in "Don Juan." A second glance, however, showed me that this excellent man was really painting afresh the white lines for the game, by which he earned, I believe, about one and eightpence a day. Who shall venture to call the monastic orders useless?

In fact, in spite of its English architecture, Government House abounded in quaint sights and incidents. Chief amongst these were some I have not mentioned yet—certain formal banquets given to the prominent natives. A few English officials were always invited also; but they only heightened the bizarre effect of the others. Sometimes there was a Turkish night, sometimes there was a Greek night, and alternately the table seemed to flicker with turbans and to be surrounded with fez caps like a border of scarlet poppies. As few of the Greeks, and not one of the Turks, were able to speak a single word of English, it might be supposed that conversation would not flourish. On the contrary, I have rarely known it busier, and for this reason: half the remarks made had to be committed to an interpreter, who first understood them wrongly, then had them explained to him, and finally passed them on to the person to whom they were addressed. Thus one platitude about the weather did duty for several, and the loaves and fishes of small talk which each guest brought with him, by this happy arrangement were multiplied threefold. As for the interpreters, they cannot

be praised too highly. They were seated at the sides and the two ends of the table, like croupiers at Monte Carlo, and whenever an observation was hazarded or placed, so to speak, on the cloth, they raked it in, making it sound as they did so, and adroitly transferred it to the person to whom it was addressed.

Meanwhile various letters had reached me which warned me that my time in Cyprus was fast drawing to a close. I was expected, at the beginning of March, by some friends who had a villa near Florence; and it had become necessary for me to settle the day of my departure. There was one difficulty, indeed, in the way of doing so, and this was the fact that not a soul in all Nicosia knew anything about the homeward steamers beyond Port Said or Alexandria. At last, however, I got some information from a Government functionary at Larnaca, which showed me that if I started in ten days' time I should just catch at Port Said the homeward mail to Brindisi. This accordingly I had arranged to do. My days in Cyprus being thus unhappily numbered, whatever I meant to see I should have to see quickly; so of all the sights which I had

once contemplated exhausting I found myself obliged to select and be contented with two. One of these was the mediæval sea-port of Famagusta; the other was a castle about ten miles distant from it, as interesting as St. Hilarion, but of a totally different character, which was one of the things about which Mr. Matthews had spoken to me. Such being the case, Sir Robert had written to recommend me to Captain Scott, the commissioner of the Famagusta district, who replied, naming a day on which he would be happy to receive me.

The day arrived. Famagusta was nearly fifty miles distant; I had been told I should allow about nine hours for the journey, and Sir Robert himself assured me that this was none too much. My carriage was therefore ordered for half-past nine—a different carriage from the last, and happily with a different driver. This time it was a regular old-fashioned landau, which age and exercise had reduced to the colour of an unblacked boot. But it was not uncomfortable; its size made it imposing, and when it rumbled sedately off with its four dejected horses I felt like my own grandfather beginning the grand tour.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GLORIES OF FAMAGUSTA

TO any one looking at the map of Cyprus it would seem that the road to Famagusta, which is situated on its eastern coast, lay over a dead level. I had studied the map myself, and been delighted with this conclusion. I found, however, that it was not wholly correct. It is true that, regarded as a picture, the whole country I passed through was a plain ; but it was a plain that would rise for miles in imperceptible slopes, and then descend abruptly in steep and dangerous banks. There were, therefore, some bits of exceedingly nasty road, which, after my late experience, might have made me uneasy if it had not been for Scotty, whose nerves were far more delicate than my own, and who, whenever we came to the slightest dip in the road, forced the driver to go at a foot's pace.

Landscapes, even when their general type is

similar, are capable of as many expressions as the same type of human face, and, without our being able fully to tell why, affect our spirits as we look at them with as many moods and meanings. I have said already that in my morning journeys to Kythrea the plains conveyed to me a sense of the patriarchal ages. Plains to-day which were bordered by the same mountains made me feel that I was travelling through Arcadia. Far and near over pale rocky expanses, green in the sunlight, rose the leaves of innumerable asphodel, and vaguely here and there flocks of sheep were wandering. For the first part of the way I could distinguish Kythrea to the left of me, eight miles off or so—a straggling blot of green, lying at the foot of the mountains. Then it died out of sight, and the wonderful mountain ranges shifted their peaks into a new succession of citadels, and reached away like a tapering purple spear into the distance.

We arrived about one o'clock at a long, mud-built village; and at the door of a courtyard belonging to some house we halted. Almost instantly an old bearded man, very dirty, but, despite the dirt, very dignified, made his appearance at

the side of the carriage and bowed. At the same time Scotty explained to me, "Here, sir, we stop for one hour. The luncheon you bring—you eat it in this house." "No," I said, "I should prefer eating it in the carriage." "But, sir," said Scotty, "this is the head-man of the village. All English gentlemen eat their luncheon here. Upstairs he has nice room ready for you." Unwilling to wound the old man's feelings or disappoint what I presumed were his hopes of earning some trifle by his civility, I followed him across his court, and up a species of step ladder, and was shown by him into a room, bare but scrupulously clean, furnished with a table and a few rush-bottomed chairs, and adorned on its whitewashed walls with a lithograph of the Prince of Wales. Here Scotty laid out the cold luncheon I had brought with me, and the old man, before I had half finished it, embarrassed me by adding some further refreshments of his own. Some meat and some oranges I civilly but firmly declined, but I took, in order to please him, a tumbler of his Cyprian wine. To my surprise it was excellent. I say "to my surprise," because though most of the wines of the island

might be excellent if made properly, they are generally spoilt for the European palate by the skins they are kept in and a villainous taste of resin. But here of this taste there was no trace whatever, and I wished for a competent friend who might have shared and discussed the draught with me.

Luncheon over, I strolled out into the village. I looked at the brown farm-buildings and at two old Greek churches. The air flowed through the streets like currents of tepid water. Presently I saw that the door of one of the churches had been opened. I entered and looked about me. The gilded and painted screen was, as usual, the only noticeable feature. Whilst I was looking at it I heard a voice at my ear. I turned, and saw that an old man was addressing me. I concluded he was the priest, though it was too dark to see much of him; and to avoid being absolutely silent, or making only inarticulate sounds to him, I mustered enough of his language to ask for the New Testament. He took me behind the altar to a little twilight sanctuary, and showed me a thin quarto bound in velvet and silver. I opened it at St. John's Gospel,

and began reading aloud to him, appealing to him by a look to set my pronunciation right. He seemed delighted at thus playing tutor, and I was wondering that so small a village should have a priest so cultivated, when, passing with him into the daylight, I saw that he was my dirty old host. There now revived in my mind the same dreadful perplexity which had annoyed me in the castle of Kyrenia with respect to my friend the thief. Ought this old man to be paid? And if so, what? I began to fear that he would be too grand to accept anything, or—worse fear still—anything not exorbitant. I consulted Scotty. Scotty said, "Give him nothing, sir. He the head-man of the village. He like doing this. He do it always for English gentlemen. No, sir, you give him nothing." That was an idea, however, which I could not tolerate, so I postponed the difficulty by saying I should be returning in a day or two, resolving meanwhile to consult Captain Scott on the subject.

Another three hours of travel through similar scenery brought us to another village—a mere cluster of cottages, close to which was a beautiful farm or villa, belonging, if I recollect rightly, to

a Levantine banker in Nicosia. The house, which I could hardly see, was secluded in a luxuriant garden of orange trees and huge cypresses, shooting up from the plain like a dark volcano of vegetation. A wall of reeds was round it, twenty feet in height, and the life of the oasis flowed to it in a long aqueduct. In view of this garden we halted, that the horses might rest again; and by the time we again started there were already symptoms of evening. Evening was full of suggestions of the nearing end of my journey, and set me thinking over what I expected to find at it. Of the past history of Famagusta I had learnt quite enough for the imagination to work upon. I knew that it had been fortified by the Lusignans, and probably strengthened by the Genoese, who seized the town at the end of the fourteenth century and held it for ninety years as a kind of commercial Gibraltar. I knew also that Venice had left her mark on it. Again, I knew that during all these periods it had enjoyed a commerce and an opulence which is generally little realised. The merchants of Famagusta were then amongst the richest individuals in the world. The jewels, for instance, belonging to the wife of one

of them, were so renowned and splendid that a Sultan desired to buy them, and at a fabulous price he did so; but the lady and her husband, afterwards regretting their loss, offered half as much again in order to buy them back. Then too I had heard about splendid palaces and two hundred churches—about one church in particular, which was built by one of the merchants entirely out of the profits of a single voyage to Syria. But all my knowledge was vague, and I felt its vagueness most with regard to the present state of the town and the preservation of its ancient buildings. I had seen some photographs of it. They showed me some old walls and a cathedral, a study of a Gothic window, and some miserable mud-roofed houses. But there was no general or intelligible view of the place, and these fragments of it had bewildered rather than enlightened me. I was glad that this was so. It gave me the more to think about. In fact my mind was so well and so fully occupied that I had hardly had leisure to feel impatient when darkness had descended on the plains, and there were still no signs of our destination.

Suddenly, however, without any apparent reason, the carriage came to a standstill, and a boy who had been brought by the driver—I could not conceive why—jumped down from the box. The lamps had already been lighted; the boy took one of them and ran on as if to explore the way. To me nothing was visible, as I looked out, but bare rocky ground, whose ridges gleamed in the lamplight with so wan a brightness that I felt convinced there must have been a shower of rain. Scotty presently came to the window and said to me, "The boy gone on, sir, to find out the way. The driver he not see it. The ground here covered with snow." I looked again, and so it actually was; and the air, which at one o'clock had been like July in England, smelt and felt as keen as an English February. In time we began to move again, but at a foot-pace only, the boy with the lamp preceding us. This lasted for something like twenty minutes. Then all of a sudden the snow ended like a carpet. The ground on each side was dark again; the road was a dim glimmer, and the horses resumed their trot. On we went, and as I looked out occasionally I could see no reason why we should not go on for ever. We did

not as a matter of fact go on for even half an hour. We abruptly stopped again. Again the road was invisible, and this time because the country was under water. The wretched boy, who was unembarrassed with boots, got down with the lamp again and paddled in front of us like a marsh sprite. We crawled after him, and at length regained dry ground. The driver's patience now seemed exhausted, for he whipped his horses up, and we started careering wildly over what seemed to me to be trackless open fields. Could we possibly, I asked myself, be on the highroad to Famagusta? In reply to this mental question the carriage soon ceased to jolt, and began to wade and labour through something that seemed like sand. It was an hour past the time when I ought to have been at the end of my journey; and I should now have been in positive despair if at this precise moment there had not come to my ears the clear notes of a bugle. I looked out on the side from which the sound came, and saw in the darkness some huge shapeless building, which I knew must be part of the fortifications of Famagusta. But I had not much time to look at them, for the carriage turned sharply round, and to my sur-

prise began to drive straight away from them. At the same time we were again on a hard road.

I knew that Captain Scott did not live in the town. No one did, I was told, but a small body of Turks. He lived in a suburb called Varoshia; but it seemed to me a suburb that was at an interminable distance. At last, to my great pleasure, we passed a few roadside houses, and a minute or two later we were in a street lit with lanterns. I was surprised at its length and its picturesque appearance. On either side of the way there were quaint arcades at intervals, and here and there in open spaces were piles of pitchers, huge jars, and all kinds of pottery. At the end of this street was, at last, the end of my journey. We drew up before a door something like Colonel Falkland's, and presently came a man with a lantern, followed by Captain Scott. The house, I saw at once, was of the regular Cyprian type. There was the same court or garden, the same cloisters, and the rooms were spanned by the same pointed arches.

I need hardly say that dinner was an exceedingly welcome sight. I discovered during the meal that my host, like myself, was a photographer, and

Famagusta naturally had supplied him with a number of subjects. During the evening he showed me a collection of views he had taken of it; but he had confined himself almost entirely to isolated architectural details; and the general aspect and the general condition of the town was still left to my imagination, like a sort of changing cloud. I took it to bed with me in this state and dreamt of it; and I rose next morning with all the greater zest, ready to find out the truth of the matter for myself.

Once more I realised, when, under the cloudless sunshine, I started after breakfast, the faithful Scotty guiding me, that Cyprus was a land of many climates, all delightful and all having the soft blandishment of a siren. The street of Varoshia by day was as picturesque as it was by night. The shops were like those of a mountain town in Italy; and the pale collections of pottery, stacked in the open air, gave it in places the look of a sculptor's studio. It died away into a sort of open common, bounded on the right by green gardens and olive woods, and beyond them was a sea, which recalled the hues of the Riviera. Crossing this common, on whose edges the sky rested, I paused on a low ridge

to take in the scene beyond. What I looked upon was a shining meadow of asphodel, with a bevy of Turkish women in white yashmaks, moving across it slowly like a living cluster of lilies. To the right of me still were the sea and a belt of gardens; to the left on the horizon were the grave-stones of a Turkish cemetery; and in front of me the asphodel swelled like a hardly perceptible wave, till its crest approached and very nearly eclipsed a stretch of interminable masonry cutting the sky like a ruler. I need hardly say that I recognised the ramparts of Famagusta. At first nothing struck me but a single straight line. Then I perceived that here and there were bastions, and to the left, away from the sea, a cluster of sombre towers. Towards these towers it was that the road conducted me, and just opposite to them it entered a shallow cutting. Reaching this spot, I perceived for the first time that before the walls there ran an enormous fosse, cut in the solid rock; and here a causeway crossed it, which led to an arched gate. In all directions the walls were scarred and seamed with the marks of former gates, older even than this one; and this one must have dated from the days of the Venetian conquest,

whilst one of the others had been the work of the engineers of Genoa.

But before I explain any further details of this singular town, at whose threshold I was now standing, let me say a word about its general plan and situation. It will help the reader better to understand what follows. Famagusta is, roughly speaking, a square of about a mile, and is surrounded by walls of which every yard is perfect. These walls are about fifty feet in height, and are, on an average, twenty-seven feet in thickness. One of the four faces the sea and harbour; the three others overlook an immense plain, parts of which are barren and strewn with sand. Round the whole of these landward walls the fosse runs continuously. There are only two gates—the water gate, opening on the harbour, and the land gate, whose outer aspect I was a moment ago describing.

When I reached this gate I stood for some time on the causeway, wondering, before I entered, what I should find within. Not a sound broke the stillness; not a soul seemed to be stirring. The place might have been a tomb, or a city in an enchanted sleep. At last in the darkness of the arch I saw a

figure that seemed a negro's, lean and in tattered clothing, which peeped at me and then vanished. A minute or two later there emerged an old man with a donkey. They passed me slowly and drowsily, and nothing else moved.

"In this ditch, sir," said Scotty, "they often shoot many snipe—game, sir, much game. My brother he tell me that. He live here. He belong to the coastguard."

"Is your brother a poacher?" I said, annoyed at this inapposite interruption.

"Yes, sir," said Scotty, who understood the question but imperfectly. "He shoot much. My brother a poacher—yes, sir."

Happily here the conversation dropped. I crossed the causeway and entered the dark portal.

For forty feet or more I traversed a vaulted passage, with a sharp bend in the middle of it and just wide and high enough to allow of a waggon passing. In the gloom as I went by I noticed some ancient gates leaning, half unhinged, against the wall, and two places where a portcullis once descended. Then the passage widened into an open cavern of masonry, as big as a baronial hall, and at the end of this was

the interior of the town like a picture. Facing me in the foreground was a poverty-stricken café, with a porch in front of it, supported on tottering columns and festooned with onions. To the left a lane, narrow, dirty, and tortuous, lost itself amongst a collection of hovels. To the right, built against the towers that reared their masses over me, was a little house in ruins, with the plaster of its rooms showing; and beyond it I saw beginning the long lines of the ramparts. Between the ramparts and the café was a gap, littered with rubbish, which seemed to give access to some open space beyond. I passed through it. A paved incline led me up to a bastion, and from thence I saw something of what the town, as a whole, was. I saw that about a quarter of it was occupied by a drowsy village, rudely built of stones that had once been parts of palaces; and above the sea of their miserable mud-roofs rose two great churches, one of them evidently a cathedral. As for the rest of what I have called a town, so far as I could see from that spot, it was a desert. In all directions the grass was growing, on soil uneven and mounded with fallen and shapeless buildings; hillocks of gray

stones were scattered about like haycocks, and amongst them, here and there, was a palm tree, or group of palm trees, watching by the dead like their brothers in far Palmyra. But what gave to the scene its most peculiar character still remains to be mentioned. It was a flock of churches, most of them almost entire, which were standing in this solitude, like a flock of scattered sheep. Wherever I looked a fresh one caught my eye. Some of them were hardly twenty yards from each other. When I entered the town my thoughts had been of Venice and Genoa; these churches took me back to the crusaders. The sight, as I realised it, affected me like a burst of devotional music, vibrating far off from the lost ages of faith, distinct, and yet so faint that it made me hold my breath to hear it. It surrounded me with a new atmosphere, in which new thoughts were whispering; and amongst other things it occurred to me that outside of Palestine this was the most eastward town of all the crusading world—the town nearest to the Holy Sepulchre.

I descended from my elevation, and stumbling over the uneven ground, I made my way to the church that happened to be closest to me—a plain

structure externally consisting of three aisles. I entered by a side door, the principal one being closed. I shall always remember that moment, when I found myself in the hollow shade, in the faintly echoing silence, of the interior. The floor was covered with refuse and drifted sea-sand; a mud pen for cattle obstructed one of the aisles, and shadows of faded frescoes were glimmering on the walls all around me. Of these the most distinct was a group of the twelve Apostles, which still made round the chancel a continuous company of colours; and as I tried to follow the details of limb and drapery, and to decipher the expressions and features of the half-obliterated faces, the light fell on a scroll, still as distinct as ever, letting me see that it was held in the Saviour's hands, and that on it was written, "I will give you bread from heaven." It had only taken a single glance to show me that the whole of the building must have been gorgeous with painting once; but except in the chancel I had at first detected nothing beyond stains of pigment, and here and there an aureole. Now, however, as I grew accustomed to the gloom, row upon row of figures became discernible, till I seemed to be

surrounded by an army of saints and angels ; whilst as if to connect all these with the world of men still struggling, at the top of the pictures ran a curious and graceful border, consisting of flowers alternating with coats of arms. As I lingered I felt that the walls were alive with worship, with the creed that men are rejecting ; and the naked sky stared in at the empty windows, and through them, unnoticed and unobstructed, the drifting sea sand entered.

I went from this into several smaller churches, all standing so near to each other that they might have been in one large field. The structures of these were somewhat more ruinous, but the frescoes in one of them at least were more distinct and brilliant. There was a perfect St. George plunging his spear into the dragon, and a Madonna whose robes were as blue as that morning's sky : and in all was the same soundless echo of prayers long silent. It may be thought a piece of empty sentimentality to say so, but these churches seemed to me to be embodied prayers in themselves. There they stood, looking towards Jerusalem, broken but still steadfast, like the forlorn hope of a world.

But I was not all this while forgetful of other

things. Quitting the churches and climbing a mound of stones, I saw at a far corner of the fortifications some low round towers overlooking the sea. I knew that somewhere or other Famagusta possessed a castle, and at once perceiving that these towers must belong to it, I set off over the grass and ruins towards them. As I walked my mind still went back to the churches, especially to the one in which the frescoes were most brilliant, and more especially still to two inscriptions I had noticed, the one on the dragon's scales, the other on the Madonna's robe. The first of these was a man's name, Demetrius Something, followed by a date. The second was a man's name also, with a date which was only a few years later. I recall this distinctly, though I forget the other. It was "B. Barker, 1808."

The distance to the castle, could one have reached it in a straight line, would have been about half a mile, but I found unexpectedly that to reach it thus was impossible. When half-way towards it I came on a sunken lane, with a wall on the far side, and this I was obliged to follow. It led me by a long circuit amongst some of the Turkish dwellings. Wedged in between them I came upon more churches, with

straw protruding from under their rude doors and mules' noses poking out of their windows; and in one place I passed a beautiful carved fountain, just such as one might see in an old town in Italy. The castle turned out to be an oblong, irregular building, with outworks facing the town; so that it, if the town were taken, would still remain defensible. Nowhere externally was there any trace of a window. There was nothing but straight blind walls and squat bulging towers. The only detail by which the eye was arrested was a square white patch directly above the gateway: it was the lion of St. Mark, which had been let into the wall by the Venetians. And now let me tell the reader that this dark and forbidding building, in which perhaps his fancy detects little to interest him, is really connected with a set of names and with a story almost as familiar to every one of us as if they had been facts of our own lives; for in this castle is a tower still named by tradition *Torre del Moro*, from having once been the lodging of one of the Venetian generals, Christofero Moro, the original of the Othello of Shakespeare; and it was to this castle, if anywhere, that Othello must have brought Desdemona.

As I passed in through the long dark entrance the figure of Iago seemed to lurk in the shadow. As I climbed to the battlements by an external staircase Othello himself came with me, speaking familiar language, and all the place was filled with a well-known company, which the reader can imagine without my being at the trouble to describe it to him. I was, in fact, almost as much at home as if I had been sitting in the stalls of the Lyceum Theatre.

And yet here, though it was hard to believe it, was not pasteboard but reality. From these embrasures, whose stones were still so keen though grass trembled along their crevices, cannon once thundered. The genuine sea-wind was at this moment breathing on them, and at the bases of their walls the live waves were splashing. The various views of the town from this position were extensive, in especial those of the harbour with the walls and the quay facing it. This harbour, so engineers say, might without any great expenditure be made one of the finest in the Mediterranean; but now on its glassy waters only a few boats were rocking. Nothing larger could enter; it is almost silted up,

having been left to complete neglect since the days of the Turkish conquest.

As to the castle, half of the rooms, it seemed to me, were walled up and utterly inaccessible. I certainly saw along one whole side of the court a row of windows which had no corresponding doors. I made my way, however, into a number of vaulted chambers—prisons, guard-rooms, and magazines for powder—and at last I discovered a great echoing hall, roofed with Norman arches that rested on heavy pillars, evidently, I said to myself, the very hall where Iago and Cassio had "made the canakin clink."

On mornings like these one loses count of time, and my watch now gave me a start by telling me that my host's canakins would soon be awaiting *me;* so I tore myself from the past and regretfully walked back to the present.

I did not remain there long, however. In the afternoon I came back to Famagusta, and Captain Scott came with me. The day had clouded over; some soft rain was falling, and I saw the place under a strangely new aspect—an aspect to my English eyes not of deeper, but as it were of homelier melan-

choly. Just as we entered the rain became heavier, and we sheltered ourselves for a time under an enormous arched recess which in the morning I had not noticed. Captain Scott pointed out to me the arms of Genoa on the walls, and then a niche some six feet in depth, from whose sides depended a few poor rags of clothing. "There," he said, "lives a curious negro beggar;" and the apparition that had greeted my first approach was explained.

As soon as the rain had abated we again set forth, and wading along through the tall weeping grass we made our way towards something which I had heard of, but not yet seen, the Venetian arsenal and cannon foundry. It had for a moment crossed my thoughts in the morning, but I could discover nothing that in the least suggested its whereabouts; and indeed now, as I went with my companion, I was equally unable to conjecture where it was. Nothing was before us but the long line of the ramparts, which showed us little but slopes covered with vegetation. By and by, however, in one of these slopes we came to an aperture like the burrow of a Titanic rabbit. As we entered it I saw that it was vaulted with beautifully cut stone-work. We

advanced a few paces; then the burrow widened, and we found ourselves in a crypt of broad, curving galleries. They were sufficiently lighted from a small court or well, and the windows showed us the enormous thickness of the masonry. They showed us also the perfection and the wonderful preservation of it. Here and there, in a corner where once must have stood a furnace, the low, incumbent arches were still stained with smoke, but everywhere else the stone-work was so raw in its freshness that one felt inclined to look for the mason's tools at the foot of it. Departing by a passage like that by which we had entered, I saw that the whole was contained in a thickening or excrescence of the ramparts. We reached the world outside through a bed of untrodden weeds.

Captain Scott, having heard what I had seen in the morning, had promised to show me such other objects as would, he thought, be most likely to interest me. He now therefore took me to a house—or rather to a shed—where some fragments of armour, found amongst the ruins, had been collected. They were too much broken, however, to be of interest to any one but an expert. So far as my eye

could tell me they might have been pieces of rusty biscuit-tins. We were now in the inhabited quarter, amongst the tangled alleys. They were wretched beyond description, but after leaving the armour a walk of a couple of minutes brought us to an open space, whose spruce and orderly aspect struck me with some astonishment. Perhaps its condition was due to the fact that some few Government officials, including a body of *gens d'armes*, had their quarters on one side of it. On another side was the cathedral, with the ruins of some contiguous buildings, and opposite to the cathedral was a ruin of a different character—the ruin of a palace which the Venetians had built for their governors. A stately Renaissance gate gave access to a spacious court, flanked to right and left with the remains of what once were offices, and having at the end the body of the palace itself, a high roofless shell with a multitude of square windows. The court was gravelled with an almost meaningless neatness, considering how few eyes ever looked at it to whom neatness meant anything, and it was garnished at intervals with pyramids of old stone cannon-balls.

Having seen the palace, we turned next to the

cathedral. It dates from the fourteenth century, and its style is so English that many authorities have supposed it the work of English architects; but it struck me as like an English flower that, bewitched by a strange climate, had opened wider than it ever would have opened at home. The west front, which faced the gate of the palace, was a lace-work of doors and windows, the central window, which rose nearly to the roof, having in its tracery a large and beautiful wheel. All was practically perfect, it being now used as a mosque, except two decapitated towers, on one of which was a minaret. As I wandered round the building at every step I took I was more and more surprised at the grace and the exuberance of its ornament. From the bottom to the top it was rough with flowers and mouldings. As we lingered looking at it we felt that the light was failing, and we presently turned away and proceeded to one of the bastions. Here Captain Scott showed me a deep well or opening, at the bottom of which is now the tomb of a Turkish warrior, painted red and green like a child's toy locomotive; but tradition says—a tradition which is alive to-day—that the Venetians during the siege had in it a re-

volving wheel armed with knives, on which they threw the Turks as they scaled the wall, till the hollow below was choked with dismembered bodies.

From this spot I turned to take another look at the cathedral. I saw it under a new aspect. It rose out of a wilderness of desolate stones and grasses into the wan dimness of a weeping English evening, making me notice for the first time its colour—a curious tawny yellow, like the reddish parts of a lion. The broken towers, the pinnacles still perfect, the long line of carved windows and of buttresses—close to these, under their shadow, were dwellings and human beings; but it seemed to the imagination as if this strange and yet familiar building were utterly alone in the heart of some endless solitude.

The landscape of the mind, against which our thoughts and expectations move, when the wind of the imagination is active, changes as quickly as the clouds; and indeed it consists often of several landscapes, semi-transparent and showing through one another. A few minutes later I had a curious illustration of this. Instead of returning home through the gate of the town we descended a flight

of secret stairs in the wall, and through an aperture, that might once have been a drain, we struggled out into the fosse. I had seen in the morning that the rock here was covered with asphodel. It seemed asphodel now no longer ; it was northern docks and nettles. There was here and there a pool of standing water, with tall grasses near it, that took the likeness of reeds ; and as we went along our coming disturbed some waterfowl. How or why I am not prepared to say, but a sense came over me that I was in some marshes in the East Riding of Yorkshire. I felt that in front of us must be the broad-shouldered keeper, with his leggings and his velveteen jacket ; and I fancied that soon I should be nearing the lights and the avenues of a house which, except in memory, I had not entered for years. Rooks cawing in the elms, grooms in the stable-yard, figures standing about the fire in the hall or in the drawing-room, of whom half are dead, and every one of them changed—all these too came flitting across my mind ; and then presently through the unsubstantial pageant, solid and strange, the walls of Famagusta asserted themselves, and the abandoned towers built by Venice and Genoa.

CHAPTER XIX

"VELUT UMBRA"

THAT evening at dinner I made a very pleasant acquaintance in the person of Mr. Guillaume, a distinguished naturalist and traveller. He had contrived to find in Varoshia bedrooms for himself and his servant, but so far as meals went he was the guest of Captain Scott. Excepting myself he was the only stranger in Cyprus who was thus at a loose end, as it were, and not on some professional duty. What castles and ruins were to me birds and beasts were to him; but he had no objections to taking a castle by the way, so when I told him what were my next day's plans he offered me his companionship, which I very gladly accepted.

My next day's plans were these: I have already mentioned that I had heard of another castle, which I had wished to see during my visit to Captain Scott. The name of this castle was Aya Napa, and

Mr. Matthews had described it to me as the best specimen he knew of a country seat of a mediæval Cyprian noble, in which the feudal fortress had softened into an Oriental pleasure-house. Its original lords, in common with the whole Western *noblesse*, had long since wholly disappeared out of the island. Since then the building had been a monastery; at the present moment it was a farm; and though some parts of it were gone, much of it was in good preservation. Such was the information I was able to give to Mr. Guillaume when, at the hour appointed, our mules—we were to ride on mules—assembled at Captain Scott's door, and thrilled the street with excitement. We had two muleteers, two servants, and a *zaptieh*, or mounted *gendarme*, whom Captain Scott sent with us. I forget why or how it was supposed he might be of use to us, but he at all events gave our cavalcade such an air of dignity that the street boys cheered us as we started as if we had been a coach and four.

Our road lay over a perfectly flat country, some of which was grassy like an English common, some ploughed like fields in Essex or Lincolnshire,

and some a waste covered with bog-myrtle and boulders. The first special feature that caught my eye in the landscape was the presence of several churches, evidently long abandoned, standing on the plain amidst the plough-land, with no habitation near them. There were three of them in a single field, as lonely as three crows. I took them to be one of the many indications remaining, of how densely the country in former times was populated. By and by we passed by a large lake—large at least in proportion to anything I expected to come across. It was several miles in length. A fringe of reeds was round it, and water birds flew and flitted over its smooth surface. Just beyond this we passed through a mud-built village, called Paralimni, or in plain English Lakeside. One thing made it peculiar: it was a village of dyers, and the only dye used was black, or an inky purple. We saw the liquid simmering in smoky caldrons at cottage doors, over fires on the bare ground; blue-black washings meandered in streams along the gutters, and dyed material hung drying over garden walls and over currant bushes. After this we met nothing but open country, on which, like

breath on a glass, spring was breathing a faint mist of greenness.

The last two miles of our ride were down a gentle stone-strewn slope, with the sea in front of us, fretted by low gray rocks. At the lower edge of the slope, between it and the sea, was a straggling village, built on a level belt of land, and at one end of it was a grove of sycamore-figs and olives. The *zaptieh*, who preceded us, trotted on towards this, and presently disappeared behind a ridge of rocks and a cottage. We followed in his track, and as soon as we had surmounted the ridge the castle of Aya Napa, before completely invisible, was straight in front of us, not thirty yards away.

It was a square building, surrounding a court-yard. It had been originally two stories in height, but the second story remained over the entrance only. It was pierced externally on the ground-floor with small square-headed windows about eighteen inches in width, and also with a line of loop-holes. The upper windows were of a very different character, the two that remained having graceful pointed arches, and their height and width being nine feet by five. The entrance was much

like the entrance of an ordinary mediæval castle—a vaulted passage fronted by a ponderous archway, which was still ornamented with the arms of its original owner. Within the scene was curious. In the middle of the court, which was shady and green with orange trees, was a marble fountain, surrounded by Gothic arches and roofed over with a low stone cupola. Round two of the four sides ran cloisters with similar arches, singularly slender and graceful, enriched with mouldings and built of carefully hewn stones. On a third side were the stables, and on the fourth were two chapels. Of these chapels one was still in use, and I discovered on entering it a very singular thing. On this side of the castle was a low bank of rock, which formed a wall of some fifteen feet in height: against this rock the chapel of which I speak was built; and the chancel was formed, not out of masonry, but out of a crooked cave, which averted itself from the nave at an angle. Over both of the chapels there had once been an upper story, the floor of which must have been level with the ground outside. The fragment of the upper story which still remained over the entrance contained three rooms, reached

by an external staircase. They were whitewashed and weather-tight, but had no noticeable feature—at least they had not till we ate our luncheon in one of them and they thus became part of a very agreeable memory. Beneath these rooms was a vaulted kitchen, again beneath this a place that was once a cellar; and close by, in the wall, was a shadowy conduit, bubbling and echoing with the noise of unseen waters, which discharged themselves into a trough of greenish marble, through the quaintest spout in the world—the nose of a marble pig. The boughs of the trees, as I remained looking at this object, made on the wall a wicker-work of light and shadow, and flickering in it was standing a group of girls with hideous faces, but unconsciously draped like statues, and filling pitchers that belonged to the Heroic Ages of Greece.

The rooms on the ground-floor I examined one by one. They were dark and heavily vaulted; they were now used for farming purposes. In one were some broken ploughs; in one was an old olive press; and in one I came on a milk-white Corinthian capital, with a small cavity about the size of a basin on the top of it, in which some

one had just been washing the lid of a tin saucepan.

Thus making my rounds, I discovered a back gateway, on the opposite side of the court to that on which we entered. I passed through this, and found myself in the grove of trees, the rich greenness of which I had admired already from a distance. The scene was beautiful. Under the boughs the grass was the tenderest emerald; and a furlong beyond it, between the dark stems, shone the fresh levels of the sea. Presently I was conscious of a sound like the splashing of a small stream; and I saw that, just under the shadow of the castle wall, was a cistern or artificial pond, full of green reflections—reflections troubled at one spot only, where issuing from one of the walls a thread of water fell into it. As Moses brought water out of the rocks in Arabia, so one might fancy that water brought trees out of the rocks in Cyprus. By the side of this cistern stood a colossal sycamore-fig, almost a grove in itself, and neighboured by several others. As I rode away from the place, I noticed that for miles over the plain there came to the castle from somewhere a now broken aqueduct; and it cannot

be doubted that when in this way the supply of water was doubled, the sycamore-figs and the olives grew over a wider area, and embowered the castle in green and silvery shadow.

It was a pleasant place to think about—this secluded feudal dwelling, with all its piquant incongruities and all its obscure associations. The count or baron, its owner, with the name of some Western family—we know how in the feudal ages his counterparts in the West lived. We know what gloom, we know what roughness of life, was found within the walls of even the largest and most important castles. But he, the Cyprian lord, in an air scented with orange-blossom, was moving luxuriously in the cool of his calm arcades, which were bright with Eastern carpets, sweet with Eastern perfumes, vivid with fountains—let the reader complete the picture. It filled and amused my mind for half of my ride back; and was only obliterated by the fact that for the last five miles of the journey it was dusk and then was dark, and I had to look where I was going.

My stay with Captain Scott was to last for one day more. I was to return then to Sir Robert.

This one day more I resolved to devote to Famagusta. It often happens that a place which, when first visited, has surprised the spectator's eye, and deeply stirred his imagination, is, on a second visit, found to have lost its charm ; and he wonders—as some men wonder in connection with some women —how he could have ever been fool enough to feel so much and so deeply. Such was not my experience in connection with Famagusta. It impressed me the second time even more than it had done the first. The air no longer was of a soft familiar gray, it was now clear like crystal ; and the scene, which the other evening seemed to have been transplanted to England, had floated away again into the fabulous distance of the East. But the melancholy of its meaning was now even profounder. It affected me, in spite of myself, like some deep personal sorrow, which I could not understand till I had sat down alone, and thought over it. I did sit down on the slope of the silent ramparts, and waited for my impressions to separate themselves and become distinct to me. The general aspect of everything I remembered so vividly, that it no longer distracted me by the details of its unexplored novelty. The

consequence was that a number of new impressions, which I had not before been sufficiently at rest to realise, one by one became clear to my consciousness. Clearer than ever was the sense of the life, the strength, and the splendour—layer upon layer of civilisation—of which this town was the tomb; and along with this sense there now came another—a sense of its present stillness, so deep that one's ears tingled in it. I then became aware that moving about the solitude, here and there, were some sheep with a Turkish shepherd, and that a few Turkish children were playing on the fallen palaces. Now and again came a faint human voice, and once the bark of a far-off solitary dog; but clearer than all, and more eloquent than all, and seeming as though it were the silence itself speaking, over fallen palace and over dismantled rampart sounded at long intervals the rustle of the breaking sea.

I roused myself by and by; I rose, and moved towards the cathedral, wishing to take a photograph of it. As I approached it, I became involved again in the sunken lanes with which I already had made acquaintance; and had some difficulty

in discovering any near view of it. At last I lit on one—a view which was a perfectly-composed picture, seen through the gate of a poor cottage garden. I sent Scotty in to inquire if I might enter. He presently produced from the cottage a tottering, forlorn old woman. Not being veiled, she was, I suppose, a Christian; but we could hardly be quite certain of her sex, much less of her religion. She said I might do what I pleased, and retired within her door again. Merely looking in from the road outside, I little thought what a scene that garden would present to me. Half of it was green with some carelessly grown vegetables, interspersed with weeds; the other half was occupied by heaps of ancient building-stones. At one corner of it was a broken Persian water-wheel, and one of its boundaries was a ruinous Gothic church; and it was over a gap in other ruins that the cathedral showed itself.

And now in all its intensity my experience of the former morning repeated itself. The whole desolation seemed to turn into music, and fill my ears with a sound overpowering and yet faint, as if it came from the violin-strings of a thousand

distant orchestras—a sound which seemed to recede in shadowy bewildering vistas, far away into the heart of the irrecoverable centuries.

> Heard melodies are sweet ; but those unheard
> Are sweeter.

In this melody, in this harmony, everything round me joined—not only the objects on which my eyes at the present moment rested, but all the ruin which I knew was in my neighbourhood—Othello's Castle, the Venetian arsenal, the palaces fallen shapeless, and the forlorn chancels of the crusaders. As my wandering consciousness went from one of these to another, each time it seemed that a new violin sounded ; and as, for the practical purpose of choosing a position for my camera, I scrutinised the details of the actual scene before me, all this music took an articulate meaning. Through the empty trefoil arches of the small church close to me was a vision as of desert palm trees ; on its roof were clustering weeds ; unnaturally perfect, the west window of the cathedral soared with its Christian tracery by the minaret that had supplanted its towers ; and a few yards away from me, lying close to the well, were the fragments of a broken

water-jar. Was not this, in absolute, in literal truth, the embodiment of those words of the Preacher by which many best remember him? The pitcher was broken at the fountain, and the wheel was broken at the cistern. Everywhere around, where once was life and pride, the silver thread was loosed, and the golden bowl was broken; all the daughters of music were brought low, and not even the mourners were going about the streets. This was the theme which the whole city of Famagusta took up and prolonged like a fugue, in endless variations, constantly gathering to itself other thoughts as companions. Of all the energy, of all the hopes, of all the splendour of the world, as the world has been in the times that have preceded ours, might not Famagusta be taken as in some measure the symbol? And what was Famagusta now? Its beautiful cathedral, on the breast of a dead Christianity, itself no longer Christian, was a part and parcel of death, reposing there like a useless forget-me-not on a coffin. And for the rest, what remained of it? Only its prayerless churches, which sheltered nothing but beasts, and the huge shell of its forgotten towers and ramparts, which resisted now no enemy but Time.

And yet, in spite of their melancholy, the suggestions of a place like this have a comfort for the mind in some of its moods, deeper than any hope. To a man, whatever may be his creed, they bring images and promises of rest; whilst for one who has taken his creed from modern science, and has logic enough to understand it with scientific precision, their suggestions, whether of comfort or not, are suggestions of a profound truth—the burden of the whole new gospel, a burden in every sense—that all effort and that all achievement is a delusion, and what unites us at last to reality is not life but death.

It is strange to look back on what were the world's hopes once; and then to think that "to this favour they may come." Lord Beaconsfield makes one of his characters say that "the age of ruins is past." It may occur to some minds, as they look around them now, to think that the age of ruins is only just beginning.

CHAPTER XX

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

THE following morning, by half-past nine, I was briskly driving away from the scene of all this sentiment; and having yesterday been inclined to think that the best things in the world had grown old, the breath of the spring taught me that one thing at least was young. For miles and miles, on each side of the road, lines of tremulous anemones shone and smiled at me as I passed; and finally, I do not know why, they gave place to continuous asphodel. We stopped again at the village I have already mentioned, with the green garden and the aqueduct. Whilst the horses rested I sat down by this last, and watched the life of the quivering water flowing. Clear as crystal it hurried along its channel, carrying tiny leaves and sticks like microscopic boats with it. I felt as I watched it as if I were fifteen again, and the future, for a moment, renewed

the aspect of glory which once was daily visible to the happy eyes of inexperience.

At the other village, too, we also again stopped. I was again forced to accept the old man's hospitality; and this time he perfectly overwhelmed me by bringing me a plate of roast lamb and potatoes. As I strolled into the fields, in order to digest this banquet, I saw about half a mile off a curious arched structure, like the low roof of a waggon, planted flat amongst the furrows. When I came up to it, my surprise and pleasure were great. It was the identical church which Mr. Matthews had described to me as half buried by the extraordinary rise of the soil. It stood in a sunk enclosure, which was fenced round by a wall, and only its roof rose above the level of the surrounding country.

When I came back to the village the question finally presented itself, of whether the old man should be paid, or should not be paid; I had spoken to Captain Scott on this subject; and his answer was this—That the old man himself did just what Scotty said he did: he refused to accept anything in payment for his hospitality; "but,"

added Captain Scott, "his wife generally stands in the background, and when her husband is not, affects not to be, looking, you may slip into her hand any sum you please." From this I concluded that the old man himself, if the money were given him delicately like a physician's fee, would not be too delicate to take it; and as, when the time came for starting, his wife did not seem visible, I endeavoured, when I said good-bye to him, to press some coins into his palm. With a pleasant smile, however, and a gesture of real dignity, he gave me to understand that he expected and wished for nothing. I believed him, and believe him still; and it went to my heart that I had eaten his lamb so thanklessly. Just as I was starting a woman made her appearance, who I think was his wife; but I had no means of approaching her; and I could not then, with her husband's eye upon me, offer her publicly what he had just refused. I therefore went away paying them with nothing but thanks, which pleased one of them better than money, and I could only hope, though I had some doubts about it, did not please the other very much less. Thinking the matter over as I went along, I

called to Scotty, to make myself quite sure, and asked which the old man's wife was. "Sir," said Scotty, "he has several women there. I not know which his wife."

By and by, in the middle of the lonely plain, we passed a solitary chapel, standing close to the roadside. I had not noticed it as I came, so I stopped for a minute or two and examined it. Inside it was smirched and blackened with smoke. Shepherds must have used it for a shelter and lit their fires in it; but here and there were visible glimpses of brilliant colour, especially blue and carmine, which seemed to have hardly faded; and I saw that the whole walls had been originally covered with frescoes which once must have made this nameless forlorn building glow like a bed of flowers. It was dusk and nearly dinner-time when I reached Government House, and having been living amongst ruins till they seemed to have become a part of me, I hardly knew where I was when through several modern reception rooms I presently went to dinner with Sir Robert and his two aides-de-camp. The following morning I woke with a gathering sense of sadness. In

a few days my present life would be ended, and no further event, no further expedition, intervened now, so as to hide the end from my view. And yet this state of things brought with it its own compensation. It suddenly opened my eyes to new beauties which I had not remarked when I felt they would greet me every morning. I remarked them now—configurations of rocks near me, and shades of colour on the mountains far away. I remarked them now as I felt them say good-bye to me.

Not only the landscape but Government House itself assumed a charm which I could never have suspected it of possessing, though this, perhaps, may have been simply due to the fact that I had by this time come to associate them with the companionship of my host, Sir Robert. Anyhow, such was the fact, and often as I stood at the window by a writing-table, well provided with the inkstands and the paperknives, and the ormulu candlesticks of London, and through the plate-glass of civilisation looked out upon savagery, nothing, I said to myself, is so charming as a simple life, provided only that one is not asked to live it.

One incident, and only one, made any definite mark on those few days that were left to me. On a certain evening there was a succession of thunder-showers, then all the night a heavy and ceaseless downpour. "This," said Sir Robert in the morning, "ought to bring down the river." I asked what he meant by this. He answered that the river below us was rarely anything more than a dry bed of pebbles, just as it was now. But generally once—sometimes three times—in the year, it would suddenly fill with water, flow for an hour or two, and again become dry and silent. I felt that the sight must be curious, and wished that I might be able to witness it. About four o'clock in the afternoon a servant came to my bedroom and asked me to go into the garden. There I found Sir Robert with an opera-glass, standing on the bank. "Look!" exclaimed he, pointing; "it is coming. Listen! you can hear it." I listened and I looked. Very faint and uncertain I at last caught a sound like leaves rustling in a dream. Then suddenly far away on the plain I saw something flash, like the head of a pointed spear. Gradually this prolonged itself

into a slim shining line, which presently took a curve. For a time its course was straight, then it curved again. In ten minutes, over the brown surface of the fields the water had stretched itself like a long silvery snake, and the sound I had heard, growing momently more distinct, explained itself to the ear as the voice of the stirred pebbles. The river channel skirted the bottom of the garden, and thus as the flood went by we had every opportunity of observing it. It pushed forward with a mass of bubbles and scum heading it ; it split itself into fierce rivulets, which a moment later were drowned in the body of the stream ; it gurgled against banks, it circled into transitory whirlpools. Gradually, as we watched it, its volume seemed to diminish, and in an hour's time there was only a trickling rill, over which a child of five years old might have stepped.

The following morning my eyes, as soon as I opened them, fell upon packed portmanteaus and closed boxes, and a writing-table bare of all those little possessions which turn in a few days a strange room into a home. An hour or two later the act of parting was over ; I was on the way to Larnaca,

which I reached about three o'clock. I was to stay there for two days as the guest of Mr. Orford, one of the district judges, with some of whose family I was acquainted; and he and Mrs. Orford did the honours of the afternoon by showing me the sights of the town—such sights as there were.

Larnaca proper is merely a large mud-built village half a mile from the sea, and having, as I found afterwards, nothing in it remarkable but a modern Catholic convent. The part where we were now (the part I had seen on landing) was a suburb stretching along the sea, distinguished by the name of the Marina.

Of the sights I have alluded to there is not much to be said. The most remarkable was a white Byzantine church standing in a court, surrounded by white cloisters. Within were the gorgeous screen and the glittering chandeliers to which my eye had already grown accustomed, and there was a little cellar in the rock, somewhere below the chancel, in which, by the light of a flickering tallow candle, the sexton showed me the second tomb of Lazarus. Outside, in a corner of the surrounding enclosure, were other tombs of

a less equivocal character—marble slabs, enriched with bodiless cherubs, which looked as if they had strayed from a parish church in England. This strong resemblance was neither fanciful nor fortuitous, for these were the tombs of such English consuls and merchants as had lived and died at Larnaca during the last and the preceding century.

Having seen all this I was next taken through the bazaar, picturesque in its squalid way, but uninteresting after that of Nicosia. Then we adjourned to the esplanade by the sea, along which I had taken my first walk in Cyprus, when Scotty was guiding me to the scene of my first breakfast in it. The place to me now wore a very different aspect. The mixture of Gothic arches and flat Oriental roofs had come by this time to have a familiar meaning to me; but the difference I was conscious of did not lie only in that. Larnaca, the first time I saw it, was the threshold of what was remote, and strange, and ancient; now it was the threshold of everything that was familiar, and modern, and prosaic; and the life that I had so happily escaped from stared me again in the face, as I saw, on the doors of two of the seaward

houses, the words, "Messageries Maritimes," and "Austro-Hungarian Lloyd."

I had not, however, even yet quite done with Cyprus. I have said that the sights of Larnaca were not peculiarly interesting; but one sight it had which attracted me more than I can say. This was a mountain, situated about ten miles inland, crowned with a mass of building, which at once roused my curiosity. I asked Mr. Orford what the building was; and he told me that it was the monastery of Stavro Vouni, or the Holy Cross. He had himself been there; he said it was very interesting. It consisted, he told me, of a court, surrounded by rooms, and a chapel of great antiquity, containing a large cross. In the middle of this is inserted a piece of some other wood, and that is said to be a fragment of the Cross of Calvary. More curious still was an account he gave me of a series of vaulted rooms, which are under the court and chapel. Their existence had been forgotten for ages; and they were only discovered accidentally, by some robbers who visited the place, hoping to find some plunder in it. Five hundred feet below, there is another and more accessible monastery,

still tenanted by monks; but the upper one is occupied only on the occasion of an annual pilgrimage. Unhappily, to visit it would occupy two days, and I had only one day to spare. I longed, and I half resolved, to put off my departure, and to go back again to the magical voices of the wilderness. But common sense prevailed, and my longing remained a longing only.

Mrs. Orford, I think, sympathised a little with my feelings. She had never been herself to the monastery, the ascent being difficult; but it had always stimulated her fancy; and my last dinner, and my last evening, she beguiled with stories, which I wished I had known before, of the customs and superstitions that colour the life of the islanders. Most of these have by this time escaped my mind; but I remember her telling me that the coin for Charon's ferry is still religiously placed between the lips of the dead; and that a priest is buried with a lighted lamp on his breast—just such a lamp as our excavators find in the ancient tombs. I remember her telling me also that the two saints of the island are St. George—our own St. George—and St. Helena, the mother of Constantine. It is still

told of St. Helena that, going from Jerusalem to Constantinople, she stopped in Cyprus, which she had heard was suffering from an unexampled drought. Many of the people had been forced to quit the country; more still were there, in a state of lamentable privation. St. Helena came, laden with alms and pity; and no sooner had she set her foot on the soil than rain began to fall, which presently formed a river. It was called the Queen's River, and it still flows to-day. As for St. George, the memory of him is just as green; indeed, it mixes more constantly with the daily thoughts of the people. Every night, mounted on a gray horse, he is said to ride to Larnaca over the sea from Beyrout; and any malefactor on whom he sets his eyes he seizes by the hair of the head, and drags through the sea after him. Only three years ago it is said that a man was found at sunrise on the roof of a house in the Marina with all his clothes dripping; and, whatever may have been the real history of his appearance, the people believe to this moment, with the most absolute faith, that he was some thief who had suffered St. George's chastisement.

Next morning, as I was dressing, I looked out on the sea—the very sea over which the saint rides nightly—and there I saw something that had traversed it in the night likewise—not, however, anything miraculous; it was the very incarnation of modern prose—it was the long gray bulk, and the graceful lines and masts, of the Messageries Maritimes steamer that was to take me away from dreamland. It seemed to me almost as strange an object as the first sail from the West must have seemed to the natives of America. It seemed still stranger when, late in the afternoon, Scotty took me on board, performing for me his last service. The windows of the saloon on deck, the glimmer of brass fittings, the agile French of the sailors, and the slight smell from the lifted skylights of the engine-room, all affected me like the most unreal thing in the world—the forgotten voice of a friend, with whom one has long broken, heard suddenly after years, speaking to new associates.

Scotty carefully arranged my things in my cabin. I then gave him a character I had written out for him, and added something to such wages as were his due. He looked at me with eyes full

of disproportionate thanks, seized my hand, kissed it, and hurried out of the door. I followed him, and found him motionless half-way up the stairs, with his head bent, crying into the sleeve of his coat. I turned back: I did not wish to disturb him.

> Alas, the gratitude of man
> Has oftener left me mourning!

I leant over the bulwarks when he was once again in his boat; his red cap was mounting and falling in the stern; he looked back to the ship, and I waved him adieu for ever.

Besides myself there were only two passengers on board. The saloon and cabins were full of a kind of ghostly quiet. We dined at half-past five whilst we still lay off Larnaca. When I left the saloon we were just beginning to move. Darkness was falling, and alone and undisturbed I watched Cyprus melt away like a dream on a windless sea that was coloured like a faded violet.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CHARM BROKEN

MY restoration to civilisation was, however, only gradual. By sunrise we were at Tripoli, where we lay for a few hours. By eleven we were at Beyrout. Here I went ashore with a young rogue of an Arab for an interpreter, and drove into the country amongst blue and scarlet anemones, to an old castle on one of the spurs of Lebanon. Below it was a valley full of vineyards and fountains, and under a fig-tree at the door of a small tavern I took a draught of the delicious wine of the country, which shone in the glass with the tint of a blood-orange. The whole of the following day we lay off Jaffa. My two fellow-passengers had disappeared at Beyrout, so I was left completely to myself to kill time as I might by alternately reading some numbers of *Le Monde Illustré* and looking over the bulwarks in the direction of Jerusalem. To me the

prospect seemed full of an indescribable desolation and desertion. I knew that in a certain sense this impression is not just, but still the whole coast of Palestine, and its beautiful inland mountains, seemed to be saying to the world of steam and of steam-boats, "Am I nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" Not even the presence of Cook's boatman, and the arrival that evening of two dismal English tourists, could dissipate the impression I speak of; and I closed the day with a reading that seemed made for the place and hour. It was the litany which the Jews recite at the Place of Wailing. "For the palace that is destroyed, We sit in solitude and mourn. For the walls that are overthrown, We sit in solitude and mourn. For our priests who have stumbled, For our kings who have despised Him, For the majesty that is departed, We sit and we mourn in solitude."

Twenty hours, however, had not elapsed before wailing of my own quite eclipsed that of the Jews, By eleven o'clock next day I was in the New Hotel at Port Said digesting the intelligence that the P. and O. boat for Brindisi had gone yesterday, and that there would not be another for a week.

Could any prospect be more hopeless or miserable than a week at Port Said without friends or resources? The town is a large collection of flimsy sheds and houses built on an island between some salt lakes and the sea, and bounded on one side by the turbid breadth of the canal. Twenty years ago its site was a patch of the sandy desert; and level sands and water form all its horizon. It is a mongrel product—a puppy—of the modern East and West, unique without being curious, new without being novel, dull without being old. Such at least was the view I took of it, as I ate my luncheon disconsolately at the only table available, with a French *commis voyageur* for a neighbour on my left and the bloated manager of a travelling circus on my right. In the afternoon, however, I presented a letter of introduction to an English gentleman, whom I need not mention by name, but whom many will recognise if I merely say of him this—that he is the most influential European in the place, and as hospitable as he is influential. He asked me to dine with him in the evening. His house was a pleasure and a surprise. There were broad stairs, soft luxurious carpets, a superb

mummy that eyed me on each landing, a dinner and a dining-room that both might have come from Paris, and a library filled with as much comfort and literature as one would commonly find in a country house in England. He fully sympathised with my annoyance at being delayed on my journey. "If I were you," he said, "I should be off to-morrow to Cairo. A small steamer—a post-boat—starts in the morning for Ismailia, and from thence by rail you will reach Cairo at six." The suggestion came like a gleam of the sun through clouds. I resolved to act on it; my whole future brightened; and I leaned that night over the wooden balcony of the hotel in a temper very different from that in which I had made acquaintance with it a few hours ago.

And now in this happier condition, and with the kind assistance of the night, I felt as I looked down on the Canal, that scales fell from my eyes; and though in some ways Port Said was the most uninteresting place in the world, it struck me in some as being one of the most interesting. The Canal before me was as broad as the Thames below London Bridge; its farther bank was black with

a mass of shipping; lights glittered, and sometimes an unseen steam-tug whistled. As one after another the bows of the giant steamers met my eye in a line that seemed interminable, the illusion seized me that I was looking at the waters of London. The sense came over me of the huge overwhelming city, the heart of the world's life; and when I lifted my eyes to look for the roofs of Southwark there was nothing but the hollow night and the solitudes of the endless desert.

But there was more in the scene than this. Presently my eye was attracted by a sight which every night-watcher in Port Said knows—a dazzling star, with daggers of pale blue rays, shining low in the south, where the desert and the night were indistinguishable. It was not shining only, but, watching it, one became conscious that it moved. It was an ocean steamer advancing through the Canal by electric light. Nearly every night, and the whole night through, one or another of such lights is to be seen from Port Said dawning or dying on the horizon, and filling the darkness with complicated vague suggestion. In literal truth they are taken on board the vessels at one end of the

Canal—at Port Said or Suez—and are put down at the other; but these lights for the time seem to be part of the vessels' life, wandering portents, born in remote regions; and they move and move, and pass each other, like the spirits of two hemispheres. As I stood and looked, I seemed to myself that night to be still in the ancient world, standing at the portals of the modern, and to see its frontiers marked by a river of unnatural water, and patrolled and guarded by unnatural gliding fires.

It is true that as I went down the Canal next morning to Ismailia in a post-boat full of passengers who had just arrived from London, matters assumed a more commonplace aspect; but even in daylight there is much to impress the imagination in this broad street of water, which for half a day's journey runs as straight as an arrow; in the ocean steamers, now no longer stars, but immense moving masses, succeeding each other at constant intervals, and in the fact that four out of every five of them gave to our ears as we passed the sound of English voices, and bore at their sterns some name like London, Liverpool, or Glasgow. There is

something which mounts to the eyes and makes the breath come quicker, in the thought that on half the decks of Britain the sunlight is always shining. A foreigner never knows the greatness of our country till he has visited it: we never know its greatness till we have left it.

The realities of modern life, as I was reluctantly coming back to them, were certainly good enough to put their most poetical side foremost, and it was not till I found myself in Shepheard's Hotel at Cairo, till I saw the white shirt-fronts and black coats of the waiters, and heard some brilliantly dressed English ladies talking at the *table d'hôte* about "the officers," that I felt I had actually collided with fact in all its nakedness. After dinner I discovered a few acquaintances, who seemed to me like dead people come to life again; and I went with one of them to a glittering *café chantant*, where the gilded walls and the quick crash of the music produced in the mind a dream-like feeling of Monte Carlo.

In a day or two I discovered people who were more than acquaintances—who were friends—and I went with some of them the day before I left to

the Shoubra Palace, which is a few miles from the town. It is a fantastic quadrangle, filled with a marble lake; on each of its sides is a shadowy wide colonnade with horse-shoe arches, and a ceiling daubed with pictures of pashas; and at each corner is a saloon—in its own way magnificent—with gold furniture and heavy brocaded curtains. All four of them struck me as curiously interesting. They are triumphs of the finest workmanship enslaved to the vilest taste. They are perfect embodiments of a barbarism which has gone to school with civilisation, and has only learnt from it just enough to be meretricious.

The palace, or rather the palaces, stand in a large garden, the bedrooms and the ordinary living rooms being in two detached buildings. The place for a time was occupied by a son of the ex-Khedive, who has left no traces of his presence but a collection of French novels. It is now completely deserted except for a few gardeners; and though these structures are younger than men who are still young, the ruinous stucco already is fallen off from them, the garden steps are cracked, and the white balustrades are crumbling. We went

out through a small door in a wall, and there before us were the silent breadths of the Nile, just turning golden in the light of the liquid evening. The tall reeds stood rustling, which had hidden the cradle of Moses, and far off were the Pyramids standing like mounds of violet.

In the hush of the hour it seemed that all the ages were meeting. Here, at my elbow, was the pride of the modern world, made yesterday, and broken like a child's toy to-day. There in the distance was the pride of the first of tyrannies, which has seen every existing civilisation rise, and will probably live to see every existing civilisation fall.

Reflections like these were still filling my mind during all the tedious journey back to Ismailia and Port Said—thoughts of this meeting and intertangling of civilisations and ages. Once they took a form that was curiously bizarre and ludicrous. The post-boat, owing to a violent storm of wind, was unable to venture into the lake on which Ismailia is situated, and the passengers had to meet it at a landing stage on the Canal itself, which was some miles distant from the usual place of embarkation. The way lay across the driving sand of the desert,

and I and my fellow-travellers—only two or three in number—were at once beset by a crowd of Arab donkey-boys offering us donkeys distinguished by English names. On one of them I was myself soon mounted—a charming little animal with the most delightful of paces. The boy ran at its side, shouting its name at intervals; and I could not help smiling, in spite of the drift that blinded me, to find myself cantering in the foot-prints of Joseph and Joseph's brethren on a donkey whose name I discovered to be "Mrs. Langtry."

But the Canal restored me to reflections of a more serious kind, as it mixed in my mind with certain memories of yesterday. I was watching the Canal now; yesterday I had been watching the Nile; and Egypt seemed to express to me all its past and present, when I thought of it as the land where the oldest of historical waters is at this moment flowing side by side with the youngest.

Some twelve hours later I was in a totally different world. I was pacing the deck of the English steamer for Brindisi; I was in the middle of Anglo-India hurrying home to England. Around me

were deck-chairs, shawls, and yellow-backed novels, plates of half-eaten sandwiches, and tumblers of brandy and soda-water. Men were moving about, distinguished by their taste in moustaches; and there were ladies, tinkling with laughter, to whom this taste seemed to commend itself. There was a sound in the air of such words as "pegs" and "tiffin," and of giggles which marked the flirtations born of a fortnight's voyage. There was a funny man present, a well-informed man, a man who organised various kinds of amusement, and an extraordinary creature in brown velvet knickerbockers. I discovered this after a few hours' watching; and I discovered in the evening that there was also a musical man, who obliged the company with a song from a London music-hall.

Here was the modern world, or a part of it, pure and unadulterated—a world which is the special creation of the past fifty years, and which before the epoch of steam either was not or was undistinguishable. It is not an idle world; it is the world of the professions and the businesses; it is the world, in fact, which gives life to capital and capitalistic progress. For its pleasure Switzerland

is spotted with white hotels; and for its profit the Alps are coloured and crowned with advertisements. For it trains run, steamers traverse the sea, and to Rome, to Calcutta, or even to the heart of Jerusalem, are transferred in all their integrity the thoughts of Clapham and Bayswater. And yet, when I turned from this world to look at the ship's engines, at the rhythmical gray flash of the huge swaying cylinders, and the weight of the cranks revolving, and the light of the shining piston-rods, I thought, as has been thought before in many a modern household, Is not the servant a finer thing than the master? And then there came back to me my vision of the great Canal, with its gliding fires at night and its moving masses by day, and I asked myself, After all, what do these marvels mean? They mean that bitter beer is crossing the globe to India, and that curry and chutnee are crossing the globe to England. This kind of interchange is the physical reality of commerce, and the company round me were samples of the moral results of it. Such are the glories to which modern progress is tending.

At Brindisi, however, I escaped in a great measure

from surroundings whose meaning to me was so little cheering. The bulk of the passengers were going all the way by sea, and of those who disembarked there were only a few who took their places in the same train as I did. My own route was to Bologna, and from Bologna to Florence; and the sight of Italy, as I looked to right and left of me, soothed my mind with a return of the old world. Bologna, as I wandered through its dim red streets next morning, intensified this effect. The air of its arcades was electric with a sense of the past, and the bells jangled from its towers with the voice of other centuries. Again in the train to Florence, crossing by night the Apennines, the past also came to me in the breath of the wild gorges, in the voices of the torrents foaming after recent rains, and from the outlines of the ridges over which a young moon was shining. But now I felt more than ever that my last end was approaching, and that the days, even the hours, of my respite from reality were numbered. As I looked out of the window, two lines of Horace came back to me, which turned themselves, as I thought of them, into sad homely English :—

THE CHARM BROKEN.

Day is thrust out of its place by day,
And new moon after new moon hastes to wane.

My last moon of retreat had indeed waned already. I realised this for good and all, as I knew I should, during my first day in Florence. Florence may be old; Florence may be full of memories; but the life of the town to-day is as modern as the life of London: the only difference is that it is shabbier and less interesting, and it appears doubly shabby by comparison with the buildings that look reproach on it. These old historical buildings, all of them seemed to me like stained-glass windows with no light behind them. The worldly pride and the spiritual life that had once given them meaning, both alike were faded. To many people Florence is eloquent in every corner, and, if we may believe them, it speaks straight to their hearts. As for me, with the exception of a few palaces, it gave me two memories only which I cared to take away with me —only two with any serious meaning.

One of these was a half-hour I spent in the cathedral on a rainy afternoon one Sunday. The glow of magnificence outside added to the bareness of the wan and dim interior. When I entered I heard

no sound but that of my own footsteps; and though here and there was some solitary human figure, the place, filled with twilight, had an air of complete desertion. Presently, however, far off I saw a dim twinkle of tapers; and as I moved down the nave towards the opening of the great dome, a low, hoarse, murmur gradually became distinguishable. Following the sound, I was led to one of the transepts; and there before an altar, half-lost in the surrounding space, was a small kneeling congregation, making a black parallelogram in the obscurity. The low voice of the priest came tremulously over their bowed heads, only interrupted by the response of a rare Amen. The worshippers were so few, and the sound of their worship was so low, that the illimitable building, otherwise wholly silent, seemed cold and indifferent to this small act of devotion; and I vainly tried to catch some of the priest's words, in order to see what the service in progress was. In time, however, my doubts were answered. The tremulous voice all of a sudden became clearer. I heard a cadence, and I heard words which I recognised. It was the beginning of the Litany of Loretto. Then a

change came over the whole proceedings Again and again, at quickly recurring intervals, in a single volume of sound, from the lips of the entire congregation, came the cry, "Ora pro nobis." The cathedral at last was touched; and a flock of innumerable echoes every time took up the words and repeated them, with faint aërial voices, as if they were the souls in Purgatory.

The other memory which lives with me side by side with this one is a memory of a tomb in a crypt of the Certosa di Val d'Ema. It is the tomb of an abbot, whose figure in pale marble lies on the pavement, surrounded by a plain iron railing. As to its technical merits I neither know nor care anything; but on the old man's face, on his lips, and his closed eyes, more distinctly than I have anywhere else seen it, that peculiar expression rests which one thing alone can give—that expression of hope and peace escaping from a calyx of pain, which the Catholic Church has the secret of leaving on its children—that visible sign and seal of the peace that passes understanding, of the crown of life, of the aim of life, of the meaning of life—of everything in life that the modern world

is disowning. Nothing in the Uffizi, nothing in the Pitti Galleries lives in my mind like that image of a lost beatitude. By escaping from this modern world a certain peace may be found. There is peace for the wanderer in the strange seclusions of the East; in secret lands where life has preserved the past by leaving it, or where the present itself is like the past in its remo eness. Peace may be found there—for a time at any rate—a peace that is not stagnant, but vivid with a tumult of stingless pleasures, with the pulses of a magical youth given back again to the heart of experience. This is the peace which is known by the true traveller, which none can imagine except those who have tasted it, and which those who have tasted it once ever afterwards crave for. It is more than the peace of the hashisch-smoker; it is more than the peace of the opium-eater; but if indulged in too often or too long, it would be hard to deny that its effects may be even more fatal. Compared with the other peace, it is hell as compared with heaven. If we leave too often the world in which birth has planted us, each time we return to it, it wears for us a darker aspect, and finds us more and more unfit either

to choose or refuse a part in it, until at last we arrive at only this miserable conclusion—that its duties, if done, make life a meaningless burden, and if undone, an inexplicable torment.

But yet, after all, this much may be said. The true traveller, if he takes his drug in moderation —or until he has taken it, for too long, immoderately—returns to reality with at least one faculty which makes him superior to many who have never left it. He sees with a new keenness the magnitude of modern civilisation, the infinite complexity of its wants and of its means of ministering to them, and its enormous movement; and he sees how little all this astonishing apparatus has really increased the sources of human happiness. He has been outside the sphere of its operations, and he has not for a moment missed it; and he has seen more content, more hope, and not more sorrow, amongst those for whom it has done nothing, than amongst those whose lives depend on it. Steam and progress may have given much to the world, but there is nothing that they have given like what they have taken away. For this Western civilisation there may be a better future in store. Some

new revelation may some day give it a meaning, like that which it once had during the ages of faith, which it ridicules; but at present it seems to have destroyed even the materials out of which such a meaning might be made. Its highest science and wisdom result in two things only—the multiplication of superficial wants, and the disintegration of all our deepest hopes—and when we return to it, and greet it again after absence, it is hard to avoid asking in cold and sober seriousness, What does it profit a civilisation if it gains the whole world, and loses its own soul? Could any voice of redemption from the body of this death once more say to us, "Lo, I come quickly," who of us is there—not a beast or a fool—who would not devoutly answer, "Even so, come!"

THE END.

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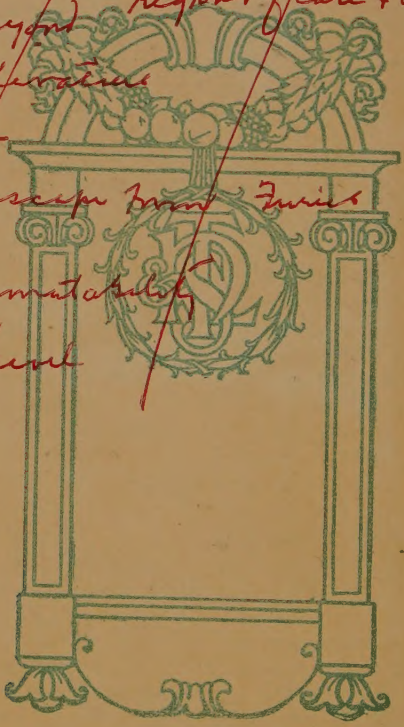

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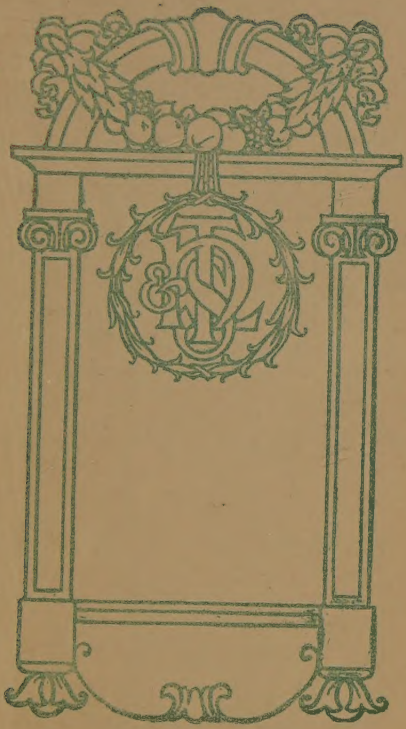

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